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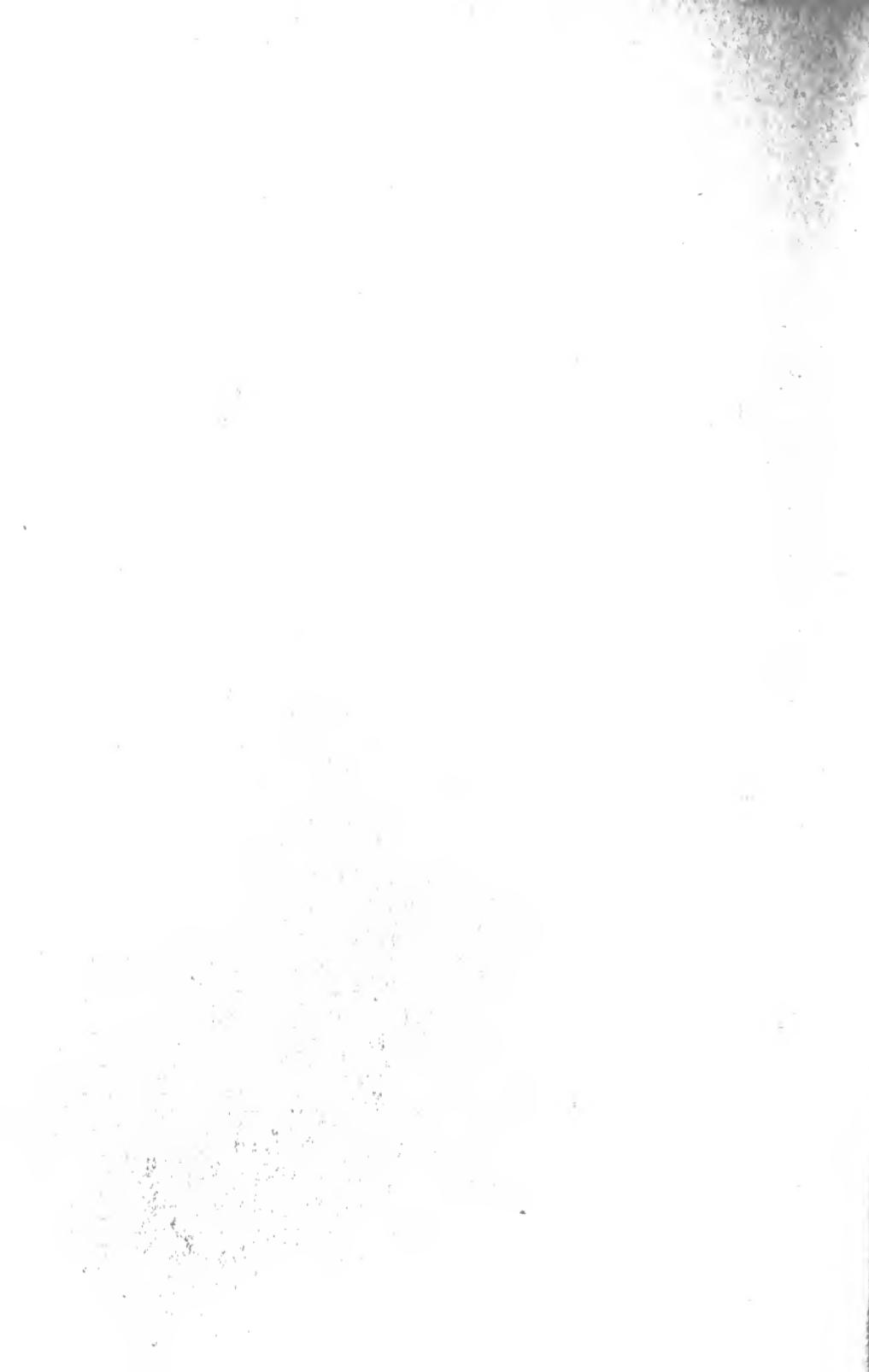
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THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF PROPER BIBLE STUDY

R. A. TORREY



THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF PROPER BIBLE STUDY

*How Properly to Study
and Interpret the Bible*

BY

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INTRODUCTION

There is a great and constantly growing interest in the study of the English Bible in these days. But very much of the so-called study of the English Bible is unintelligent and not fitted to produce the most satisfactory results. The author of this book already has a book entitled "How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit," but that book is intended for those who have much time to put into thorough Bible study.

The present book is intended, first of all, to impress men with the Importance and Value of Bible Study; secondly, to show busy men and women how to get the most out of their Bible Study; thirdly, to set forth the fundamental principles of correct Biblical Interpretation.

The book really consists of four sermons delivered to the members of my own church and congregation in Los Angeles. There were not a few children in the congregation, but they were all interested, long as the sermons were, and seemed to grasp the main points of the sermons. So I am confident the book will be helpful even to those who have but little education. Some in the congregation who are themselves in educational work, both secular and religious, have expressed their

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appreciation of the help received from the sermons.

If one desires to go into the subject more thoroughly it is suggested that he secure the author's book already mentioned, "How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit." This book will probably be followed soon by one upon the most fruitful methods of thorough Bible Study.

R. A. TORREY.

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THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF PROPER BIBLE STUDY



THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF PROPER BIBLE STUDY

CHAPTER I

THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF BIBLE STUDY

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”—Psalm 1:1-3.

Our subject this morning is *“The Importance and Value of Bible Study.”* You will find the text in Psalm 1:1-3—*“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”*

There has, perhaps, never been an age that set such great store by study as that in which we now live. The unfortunate thing about it is that so

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much of the study in our day, both by children and adults, is devoted to books and subjects in which there is little or no profit. A large portion of every year in our schools and colleges is practically wasted. Time is squandered upon the purely speculative, the uncertain, the unprofitable, the unessential, the unproductive, the irrelevant and the transitory. Many practical business men think that the sooner the boy or girl who is just out of school or college forgets half of what they imagine they have learned, the better. The most profitable of all study is wisely ordered Bible study. Its value is incalculable. It is beyond all comparison more profitable than any other study. It is the one superlatively profitable study.

Possibly some of you may be disposed to question that statement; so I will give you two reasons why Bible study is the one superlatively profitable study, why Bible study towers far above all other studies in importance and value.

I. Because of What the Bible Is

First of all, *Bible study towers far above all other studies in importance and value because of what the Bible itself is.*

1. In the first place, *the Bible is the peerless masterpiece of clear, pure, chaste, forceful, beautiful, exalted English.* Nothing can match it in purity, smoothness, clearness, force, and sublimity of expression. That admits of no question. All

intelligent, well-read and candid infidels acknowledge that. Prof. Phelps, at the head of the English Department at Yale, contended some years ago that candidates for admission to American Universities should have their qualification for admission, as far as their knowledge of English was concerned, tested by one book alone, the Bible. And Harvard University has announced in the past few weeks that hereafter every student before graduation must pass an examination in the English Bible. Because of Harvard's well-known theological position and also from the fact that they seem to emphasize the Revised Version, it is evident that they have in view principally the fact that the Bible is the great *English* master-piece. Last Tuesday I received from G. P. Putnam's Sons of New York and London, a book for examination—a dictionary of 6,000 choice and effective phrases. In this book (just published), time and again, page after page, every phrase was taken from the Bible, without variation or addition. Here and there were scattered phrases taken from Shakespeare, but on subject after subject whole pages of telling phrases were consecutively taken from the Bible. Why? Because this book of phrases was prepared by a master hand at English diction and he knew where to find the most illuminating and most telling phrases. Every man and woman should saturate themselves with the very words of the Bible if for no other reason than to clarify, tone up and invigorate their Eng-

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lish diction. When Henry Stanley, the great newspaper writer, made his second tour of exploration into the heart of Africa, he took only one book with him, the Bible. In its study he beguiled and improved many lonely hours, and when he emerged, after having been shut up with one book for so many years, it was noticed that Henry Stanley had acquired by absorption an entirely new English style, a far more forceful style, Bible English. It is said that a newspaper report of a paragraph from one of Mr. Moody's sermons was handed to Max Müller, the great philologist, and he was asked what he thought of it. He asked, "Who wrote that?" And the reply was made, "D. L. Moody." "I do not wonder then at his power," Max Müller exclaimed. "That is one of the finest pieces of clear, strong, pure Anglo-Saxon I have ever read." But where had Mr. Moody learned this vigorous English? From the only book he thoroughly knew and daily devoured, the Bible.

2. In the second place, *the Bible is the book that presents to us the most profound, the most coherent, the most consistent, the most comprehensive, the most complete, the most perfectly balanced, the most certain, the loftiest and the most enduring system of philosophy ever discovered.* I say "discovered" instead of "devised" advisedly; for man could never have devised the philosophy found in this book; man simply discovered the philosophy which God had revealed

in the Book. Time and again through the centuries men grown wise in their own conceit, and having only a ludicrously fragmentary knowledge of the Book upon which they ventured to sit in judgment, have assayed to ridicule the Bible's philosophy regarding God and man and redemption and duty and eternity. But always in the ultimate outcome the philosophy of the would-be critics has dissolved and disappeared, but the philosophy of the Bible has withstood unscathed the storms of centuries. Philosophies, empires, schools of thought have passed away, but the words of this Book have not passed away. (Matt. 24:35.) The philosophy of this Book has proven imperishable, and as good for 1921 A. D. as for 95 A. D. In view of this undeniable fact is it not evident that this is the most important and invaluable of all books to study? Do not waste your time studying the soap bubbles of man's iridescent speculation that may be beautiful but soon burst and leave nothing but a nasty, dank, greasy feeling behind, but study the Eternal Rock of this Book that is rich with real gold.

3. In the third place, *the Bible is the book that offers to us the purest, loftiest, most complete and absolutely dependable system of ethics ever known.* Systems of moral philosophy have appeared throughout the centuries and chiliads, from Zeno to Herbert Spencer, only to disappear, but all really honest seekers after thorough-going and complete righteousness, bow to the imperish-

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able durability of the ethics of the Bible. And even those who clamor hysterically for us to give up the Virgin Birth of our Lord, the resurrection of His very body from the dead and all the miracles, the Deity of our Lord, His atoning, substitutionary death, and others of the most distinctive of the doctrinal teachings of the Book, nevertheless themselves cry "Let us keep *the ethics* of the Bible. They are not only unsurpassed but absolutely unequaled." The most important thing to know is, how to live; not how to live physically, but how to live morally. If that is so then the most important book for all of us to know is the book that tells us that as no other book tells us.

4. In the fourth place, *the Bible is the one and only book that has never been outgrown or superseded*. I had occasion last summer, in breaking up our home in Montrose, Pa., to go over some of the books I studied, yes, dug into with many hard hours of intellectual toil, at preparatory school and at Yale. There was not one of them of any present value to my children or grandchildren. They had all been outgrown or superseded; other books have taken their place. But this Book has not been superseded. No University professor on earth can suggest some other book to take the place of this Book. Some venture to say "We need a new Bible," but where is it? Why do not they bring it out? When an especially callow and, therefore daring member of this crew does at-

tempt a new Bible it is only "a shorter Bible"; that is, the old Bible with parts left out that made him uneasy in his sin, or his self-righteousness and self-sufficiency. No! No! no! Any one who has a modicum of real, healthy common sense knows that you cannot outgrow or supersede the Bible. And we can safely leave those who want to get out "a new Bible" to sit and twiddle their thumbs along with the other lunatics who are working on a "perpetual motion" machine. This all being true, and eighteen centuries of unvarying history of human thought demonstrate that it is true, can there possibly be any other study so important and so permanently profitable as the study of *this, the one and only Imperishable Book?*

5. Once more, *the Bible is the Word of God.* That needs no demonstration. Some of the things I have already said this morning prove it, if you will only think them through. And I have proven it again and again from this platform. Other books tell us what men suppose; the Bible tells us what God knows. Other books tell us what other men, almost as foolish as ourselves, speculate; this Book tells us what an infinitely wise God, Who made us and all things, and consequently knows all things, *has inerrantly revealed.* If you had two books on the subject, one by the one master thinker on that subject, the other by a third-rate tutor in a fourth-rate college, which would you study most? And will you study most

the Book of God, the Book of the infinitely wise, omniscient God, or the book of some little 6x9 human brain—that is larger than any human brain as compared with the infinite capacity of the mind of the great Jehovah, the Eternal I AM.

II. Because of What the Bible Does

Bible study towers above all other studies in importance and value not only because of what the Bible itself is, but also because of what the Bible does.

On this I cannot dwell as I would like. The full exposition of this line of thought would afford more than enough material for a whole sermon by itself. Let me select a few of the more vital points.

1. (*First of all, the Bible properly studied makes men wise unto salvation.*) The great master apostle, Paul, writing to a zealous young bishop, his convert and most trusted coadjutor, says in 2 Tim. 3:13-15: “But evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known *the holy scriptures*, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” This is tremendous endorsement of the superlative importance of Bible study, and every word of it is

true. This Book does make men wise with the wisdom that is golden, the wisdom that brings eternal salvation. No other book in all literature does it with the certainty and celerity and completeness with which this Book does it. No one can study this Book aright, no matter how ignorant he may otherwise be, without becoming possessed of that priceless wisdom that means eternal life. Eternal life is found in knowing God and His Son, Jesus Christ (John 17:3). And no other book has the power to make us acquainted with God and with His Son, Jesus Christ, that this Book has. I have known great philosophers and great men of science and great literary luminaries, who did not know God, just because they had not studied and, therefore, did not know their Bibles. They knew rocks and flowers and the entrails of frogs, and the planets and the comets and the stars, and men's books, but they did not know the one Book and, therefore, they did not know the God who made the rocks and the flowers and the stars; and, therefore, they were lost, eternally lost, for all their knowledge of other things. On the other hand, I have known uncultured people, almost illiterate people, washerwomen and such like, for example, who had studied and, therefore, did know the Bible, and, therefore, they knew more of the wisdom that really counts, the wisdom that spells salvation, in five minutes, than these learned professors knew in their whole lifetime. Oh, study

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the Book that brings eternal life, make it in your own experience “the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21 R. V.).

2. In the second place, *the Bible so makes known Jesus Christ as to lead any one who studies it as he ought, to believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God and so to obtain eternal life in His name.* That is what John himself says in John 20:31 R. V. His words are: “These *are written*, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name.” Is there anything else in all the world so valuable as *eternal life*? Is there any other study for one moment comparable in importance and value to the study that brings us eternal life? In former years I had hay fever severely. Every September for three weeks or more I could not lie down to sleep, or even stay in the house at night. I would go off by myself every night where I would not disturb any one else, and all the night through would almost rupture blood vessels by spasms of coughing. I saw advertised a book on hay fever, so I bought it and studied it with great care, and obtained great relief. Was not that profitable study? But what is getting deliverance from some such wretched complaint as hay fever, to getting eternal life, and the proper study of this Book brings eternal life. No man can study even one book in the Bible, the Gospel of John, in the way he ought to study it, without believing before he gets through “that

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by "believing," obtaining "eternal life in His name." I have proven that time and time again upon all classes of men, from bartenders to a College Dean in one prominent British University and a very distinguished professor in another.

3. In the third place, *the Bible imparts God's own nature to the men, women and children who study it as they should, and thus completely transforms their inmost and their outward life.* Peter puts it this way: "through these (i. e., through the exceeding great and precious promises of the Book), ye may become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4, R. V.). Is not that great, to become a partaker of God's own nature? Well, it is through the proper study of this Book, by the truth of this Book carried home to our hearts by the Holy Spirit *as we study* it, that we become partakers of God's own nature. Centuries of experience prove the truth of this wonderful assertion of Peter. Countless men and women of the most depraved nature have obtained an entirely new nature, God's own nature implanted in them, by the proper study of this Book. I have been told that if you study Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy's "Science and Health" sedulously enough it will cure you of appendicitis. Well, study this Book as you ought and it will cure you of Devilitis. I have found it so in my own experience. If any man ever had the devils, I had them. Neither

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Mrs. Eddy nor Christian Science cured me, but this Book did. Try it for yourself.

4. In the fourth place, *this Book when properly studied, makes the one who studies it "grow like the palm tree" in all the graces and glories of Christian character.* "Desire the sincere *milk of the Word,*" says Peter, "that ye may grow thereby." (1 Pet. 2:2.) Various neighbors of mine in South Pasadena have built homes since I located there and have set out various kinds of palm trees. It is simply amazing how they have grown. Ah, but that is nothing to the way men, women and children grow spiritually and morally when they feed as they ought on "the Bread of Heaven" and "the milk" of Eden and "the finest of the wheat" in the Garden of God and "the honey out of the (Eternal) Rock," found in this Book. Oh, sometimes I almost grow weary when people come sighing about me from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from the Gulf of Mexico to the border of Canada and beyond, blubbering over their poor progress in the Christian life, and wondering why they do not make more headway. And when I ask, "Do you meditate in God's Word day and night? Do you really dig into the Bible every day?" "Oh, no, not every day," they reply, "I am very busy. I am a very hard working man," or "I am a very active business man with many other men under me," or "I am a very busy mother, and I cannot find time to get down to solid Bible study *every day.*" "Do you

read the newspaper every day?" "Y-e-s, morning and evening." And no time to get alone each day and listen to God? Thou fool!

5. In the fifth place, *the Bible properly studied, makes the heart pure and keeps the life white.* "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" the Psalmist asks, and then replies, "By taking heed thereto according to thy word." (Ps. 119:9.) There is a power in this Book, when it is properly studied, to make and keep the life clean that no other book possesses. And there is also in this Book, when properly studied, a power that no other book possesses, to make and keep the heart pure. The Psalmist says again two verses farther down, in Psalm 119:11, "Thy word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." Oh, how many stained lives I have seen bleached white by the power of the sun-rays of this Book. How many hearts I have known that were "full of all uncleanness" to be made pure and clean by filling them with the truth found in this Book.

6. In the sixth place, *the Bible, properly studied, brings peace, wonderful peace, to the troubled heart.* The Psalmist says in Ps. 85:8, R. V., "I will hear what God Jehovah will speak; for He will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints." The one who learns to sit and listen to God as He speaks to him in this Book will hear Him speaking words that will fill the heart with peace, no matter how storms may rage without

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and no matter how war howls and bellows. Listening to God's Word, David sang in the midst of the wildest conflicts, "*Jehovah is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Jehovah is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* When evil-doers came upon me to eat up my flesh, even mine adversaries and my foes, they stumbled and fell. *Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, even then will I be confident.*" (Ps. 27:1-3, R. V.) And our Lord Jesus, in the most awful night the disciples ever passed through, just before the wild storm-clouds broke, said to them, in speaking of the peace-giving power of His words, "*But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful.*" (John 14:26, 27, R. V.) Oh, here is the practical secret of perfect peace, listening to the Saviour's words as found in this Book. He is always saying to the wind-driven heart, as He said to the wind-tossed sea of old, "*Peace, be still.*" And if we listen, there is always "*a great calm.*" (Matt. 8:23-26.)

7. In the seventh place, *the Bible, properly studied, brings joy as well as peace.* Jeremiah discovered that many, many centuries ago. In the

midst of crushing sorrow, in the midst of the dis-integration and shame and agony of the nation he passionately loved and for which he would gladly have died, in the midst of conditions as dark and foreboding as ever confronted any man on earth, he sang, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy words were unto me a joy and the rejoicing of my heart." (Jer. 15:16, R. V.) Is there any joy purer than that which comes from properly directed study? But there is no other study that brings joy for a moment comparable to the joy that comes from proper Bible study. Many forms of study bring great joy to a healthy mind. The joys that come from earnest study of various kinds, philosophical, scientific, historical, literary and linguistic have been among my chief joys for many years, nearly my whole life through, from early boyhood. But there has come into my heart a joy from Bible study, through digging into the gold mines of this wonderful and inexhaustible Book, with which the joys that have come from all other forms of study are not worthy to be compared for one moment. There are no other joys like this. "*Blessed*" indeed "is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. *But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.* And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his

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fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

I might go on and on, telling the great things that the right kind of Bible study will do. There is no end to the subject; so we may as well stop here.

Is it not as clear as day that the study of a Book that is what this Book most assuredly is, and a Book that does what this Book most assuredly does, is infinitely the most important and valuable study in the world? The luster of all other study grows dim compared with this. Will you then begin to study the Bible as you ought? Begin to-day. Please note that I have been careful to say over and over again "the Bible *properly* studied," that is, the Bible studied in the way and by the methods in and by which it should be studied; the Bible studied in a way appropriate to the unique and divine character of the Book. There is Bible study, or at least what is called "Bible study," that is not so profitable as this. Indeed, there is what is called "Bible study" that is not profitable at all, and even "Bible study" so-called that is positively injurious. I would rather have a son or daughter of mine study almost anything else than have them study the Bible as they dream they study it at the Chicago University, or in the American Institute of Sacred Literature, and in many other places in these days.

I will speak next Sunday morning on "How Properly to Study the Bible," how to study it for

light and not for darkness, how to study it for life and not for death, how to study it for blessing and not for cursing, how to study it so it will lift us up to heaven and not sink us down to hell.

CHAPTER II

HOW PROPERLY TO STUDY THE BIBLE

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”—Acts 17:11.

My subject this morning is, *How Properly to Study the Bible*. I have eleven texts in which God Himself tells us very plainly and very fully how to study His Book.

Acts 17:11: *“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”* Isa. 8:20, R. V.: *“To the law and to the testimony! if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them.”* Ps. 1:1-3: *“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”* Ps. 119:11, R. V.: *“Thy word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.”*

1 Thess. 2:13: "*For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*" John 7:17, R. V.: "*If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself.*" James 1:22: "*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*" 1 Cor. 2:14: "*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*" Ps. 119:18, R. V.: "*Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*" Matt. 11:25: "*At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.*" Luke 24:27, R. V.: "*And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.*"

We saw last Sunday morning something of the importance and value of properly conducted Bible study. We saw that properly conducted Bible study was the one superlatively important study for young and old. We saw that Bible study towered above all other studies in importance and value. But we also saw that not all Bible study

had this great importance. We saw that there was in our day much that was called "Bible study" that was not profitable at all; that indeed there was much that was called Bible study that was positively injurious. So our subject to-day is, How to *Properly* Study the Bible. I use the word "properly" in its exact sense, of appropriately or fittingly. A proper study of the Bible is a study of the Bible that fits the book you are studying. A study of other books that would be perfectly proper for them would not be proper at all for the Bible; for the Bible is what no other book in the world is, the Bible is God's Book and other books are men's books. As Paul said in writing to the believers in Thessalonica, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye receive *the word of God* which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, *but as it is in truth, the word of God*, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." The *proper* study of the Bible will be the most highly profitable study of the Bible. The improper study of the Bible will be unprofitable study of the Bible. The great reason why the kind of study of the Bible that is done at the Chicago University and in the American Institute of Sacred Literature, and in many such places and institutions, is so unprofitable, why it is oftentimes so positively pernicious and injurious, is because it is so utterly improper, so utterly unbefitting the Book upon which it is bestowed. No really intelligent man would study

a fairy tale in the same way he would study an accurate and entirely reliable history. And at Chicago University they study the histories of the Bible, which are the most exact and accurate and reliable histories ever written, as if they were fairy tales, or "folk lore." No really intelligent or rational man or woman would study an omniscient God's Word as they would study ever-erring man's word. And the Bible is God's Word and they study it at Chicago University as if it were the word of men who did not know quite as much as the very self-sufficient teachers at Chicago University know. And that is a very improper, yes, a very asinine, way to study the Book that is so clearly demonstrated by eighteen centuries of investigation and uniform experience to be the very Word of God.

How shall we study the Bible so as to study it properly and, therefore, study it for the highest profit? God Himself tells us and tells us in the Bible itself.

I. Study the Bible, the Bible Itself

1. In the first place, *Study the Bible, the Bible Itself*. The importance of that comes out in a very striking way in Acts 17:11: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and *searched the scriptures daily*, whether those things were so." Notice please that it says they

“searched *the scriptures* daily, whether those things were so.” They did not search the “Talmud” nor the “Targmus,” the commentaries on the scriptures, they went right to *the scriptures* themselves. They left the muddy streams of man’s interpretations of the scriptures and went to the pure, crystal spring, the scriptures themselves. That is the proper way to study the Bible: as it is God’s Word, and as it alone is God’s Word, we must each one of us go right to the Book itself for ourselves. It is as true to-day as it was when Jesus was here on earth, that men “make the Word of God of none effect through their tradition” (Mark 7:13), and the cardinal principle of Protestant spiritual liberty as distinguished from Roman Catholic bondage to a hierarchy, yes, the cardinal principle of New Testament Christianity, is for each child of God to go right to the pure fountain of God’s Word for himself. Jesus Christ says, “Call no man your father upon earth: for one is your Father, even he who is in heaven,” and call no man master, “for one is your Master, even the Christ” (Matt. 23:9, 10, R. V.); that is to say, recognize no absolute spiritual authority; stand in independent relations to God. I refuse in my study of the Book of God to bow to the absolute authority of any pope or bishop or priest, or of any theological professor. I refuse to bow to the Roman Catholic Pope Benedict or to the Protestant Pope, Shailer Mathews, or Pope Case, or Pope anybody else, and you on your part refuse to

bow to Pope Torrey or to Pope anybody else. Get right to the Book itself, "to the law and to the testimony! if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them." Do not study commentaries, lesson helps or other books about the Bible: study the Bible itself. Do not study *about* the Bible, study *the Bible*. The Bible is the Word of God, and only the Bible is the Word of God. A young man who had just graduated from one of our great Eastern Universities came to Mr. Moody to consult with him as to his life work. He was a young man belonging to a very wealthy family. Mr. Moody said to him "Do not go into business. You have more money now than you know what to do with. Why do you not give your life to teaching the English Bible?" The young man replied "I do not know anything about the English Bible." "Why," Mr. Moody exclaimed, "I thought you had just graduated at —— University, and that they had a high-priced professor employed there for the one purpose of teaching the English Bible." "Yes," he said, "that is true, and I have taken his classes. But, Mr. Moody, would you like to know how he teaches the English Bible? We have been studying for six months to find out who wrote the Pentateuch, and we know less about it than when we started." That was not Bible study at all, it was study *about* the Bible. And a good deal of the so-called "study of the English Bible" to-day

in universities and theological seminaries is of that character.

Every child of God should dig into the Bible itself entirely independently of all commentaries or all lesson helps. I love to go alone with God and His Book and see what He has to say to me, without any man's intervention. The trouble with most of us is that we live on spoon victuals. You come here Sunday after Sunday and I ladle out to you what I have found in the Book. Go to the Book itself. I have sometimes watched a robin feed its young, and spit into their gaping mouths what it had dug up and chewed. I do not like it. It is doubtless necessary for young robins and chippy birds, but we ought to get beyond that and go right to the Book itself for ourselves.

II. Study the Bible, Really Study It

In the second place, *Study the Bible, Really Study It.* That too comes out in Acts 17:11, they "searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Note carefully the word "searched," or as it is translated in the Revised Version, "examining the scriptures." The Greek word translated "searched" in the Authorized Version and "examining" in the Revised Version, is a very strong word. It means "to search after by looking through, to investigate, to examine, to inquire into, to scrutinize, to sift." It means the closest and most minute study. The Bible being

God's Book is full of meaning in its minutest word; and is worthy of not merely the cursory, superficial reading, the careless skimming that most people give to it. That is all most of the other books, men's books, deserve; any closer study than that is a waste of time. But the Bible, being God's Book, God's own Perfect Word, God's inexhaustible storehouse of truth, in which are hidden the infinite treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God, is worthy of the closest and minutest study. And it abundantly rewards such study, and that is one of the countless proofs that the Bible really is God's Word. The more closely and microscopically you study this Book, the more you see and the more wonderful the blessing you get. The Bible should be studied with the closest and most concentrated attention. Here is where more people miss the fullest blessing in their study of the Bible than anywhere else. They are looking at the Bible with their bodily eyes, but their minds are off in a dozen other places. When you study the Bible, resolutely shut everything else out, shut to the door of your mind to everything else and shut yourself up with God alone. It may take time to cultivate this habit of concentrated attention, but any Christian can accomplish it. If you find your mind wandering, go back and fasten your eyes and your mind on that verse again, and chew every word. Remember what Jeremiah said, "Thy words were found and *I did eat them*; and thy words were unto me a joy and the rejoicing

of my heart" (Jer. 15:16, R. V.) A very prominent and very busy business man said to me one night, "Tell me in a single word, how to study my Bible." I replied, "It is a pretty big contract, to tell a man in a single word how to study the Bible, but if I must put it into one word, this is the word, 'thoughtfully'—study the Bible thoughtfully, give your whole attention to the Bible as you study it." It is well to read a chapter of the Bible and then close the book and see how much you can remember. Do the same with single verses. This is one of the greatest secrets of profitable study of any kind, *concentrated attention*; but it is preëminently the secret of profitable Bible study. The one great object of the analytical study, verse by verse, and word by word, of some books in the Bible, that I compel the students in the Bible Institute to do, is to train them to the habit of concentrated attention when they study the Bible. But you do not need to be a student in the Bible Institute to do it; any of you can learn to do it. Not only can every one of you learn to do it, but you must learn to do it.

III. Study the Bible Daily

In the third place, *Study the Bible Daily*. That also comes out in Acts 17:11, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures *daily*, whether those

things were so." The daily study of the Bible is the only proper or fully profitable way to study the Bible. We saw in our introduction that proper Bible study was the study that was appropriate or fitting to the Book we were studying, the kind of study of which that Book was worthy. As the Bible is God's Book, the only kind of study that is fitting to it, is every-day study. Do you not desire to know every day what God has to say that day? If you do not, you are a fool. Every Christian who does not study, really *study*, the Bible *every day* is a fool. Not only that, any Christian who neglects the study of the Bible one single day insults God. And you should put much time every day, no matter how busy you are, into Bible study. Certainly fifteen minutes a day is too little time to put into listening to what God has to say to you. My students think one hour a day is little enough time to spend with me and who am I? Who is God? One of the greatest follies of which the average Christian is guilty, is spending so little time each day alone with God. Mr. Moody used to say, "In our prayers we talk to God, in our Bible study God talks to us, and we had better let God do most of the talking." We certainly ought to spend more time every day listening to what God has to say to us in His Word than we require Him to spend in listening to what we have to say to Him in our prayers. Most of us spend too little time in prayer and almost every one of us spends *far too little* time in Bible study.

Stop and register a resolution right now that from this time on you will spend more time every day of your life in listening to God as He speaks in His Word, more time in real Bible study.

IV. Study the Bible to Find Out What it Actually Teaches

In the fourth place, *Study the Bible to Find Out What it Actually Teaches*. That too comes out in Acts 17:11, “they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, *whether these things were so.*” It comes out in these words, “*whether these things were so.*” They “examined the scriptures” *to find out what they actually taught*; not to find out something to corroborate their own previous opinions but to find out exactly what God had to say. Do not study the Bible to find out what you can make it mean, but to find out what God evidently intended to teach. One of the most prolific sources of misunderstanding and evil in Bible study is found right here. Men go to the Book not to find out what God has to say and what He really means to teach, but to find something that will corroborate their own view, or something that they can somehow twist into agreement with their own pre-conceived opinions. Take, for example, what the Bible teaches about the Second Coming of Christ. A host of books and pamphlets have appeared on this subject in the last few years, but not a few

of these do not exhibit the remotest desire to find out what the Bible really has to say upon the subject and to accept that as final. They are simply a labored and ingenious attempt either to discredit what Christ Jesus and the apostles do say, or else to distort it and make it mean what any fair-minded man or woman in their inmost heart knows it was never intended to mean. Take, for example, Shailer Mathews' tract, "Will Christ Come Again?" From start to finish it is simply a subtle attempt to discredit the teaching of Jesus Christ and the apostles on this subject. Or take either of the two most lauded books on the Second Coming written from the Post-Millennial viewpoint. While they are not so outrageously and blasphemously irreverent in their allusions to the words of our Lord Jesus and the apostles as Shailer Mathews' pamphlet is, they certainly are not an honest, frank, simple-minded attempt to find out exactly what God has to say on the subject. It would be a glaring outrage to study any man's book in that way: it is an atrocious insult to God to study His Book in that way. *Study the Bible with an absolutely single-eyed purpose to discover exactly what God intended to teach.*

V. Meditate Long and Profoundly on What You Find Taught in the Bible

In the fifth place, *Meditate Long and Profoundly on What You Find Taught in the Bible*. This is

what we are taught in our third text, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law *doth he meditate* day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." As the Eternal and all-wise God is the Speaker in the Bible everything taught in the Bible is worthy of our most profound and most prolonged consideration. We should ponder it, we should weigh it, we should thoroughly masticate and digest it, we should "*meditate upon*" it as we read it and hear it, and afterwards as we go about our daily work we should "*meditate upon it day and night.*" Meditation is one of the most fruitful processes of the human mind. But how fruitful and profitable meditation may be depends entirely upon what we meditate upon. There is no profit in meditation that is mere mind-wandering and day-dreaming. The most fruitful and profitable of all meditation is meditation upon God's revealed truth, God's revealed Word. It is by meditation upon the truth that truth fructifies, just as eggs hatch by being sat upon. "Blessed," infinitely "*blessed, is the man that meditateth upon the Word of God day and night.*" One of the best ways to conserve golden moments that might otherwise be squandered (for example, as we walk

the streets or fields or ride on the trolley car) is to meditate upon the Word you have been studying. Turn God's Word over and over and over again in your mind as you study it. Look at all the facets of each diamond of truth. Let the Word soak in, let it saturate your life, your thoughts, your feelings, your will. Bible-soaked thoughts are God-like thoughts. Bible-soaked affections are God-like affections. A Bible-soaked will is a God-like will. That is a large part of what is meant in John 15:7, R. V. "*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*" "*Meditate*" on the Word of God "*day and night.*"

VI. Store the Bible Up in Your Memory

In the sixth place, growing out of what we have just said, *Store the Bible Up in Your Memory*. Without such storing up in memory the most profitable meditation upon it is impossible. The great profit of storing up the Bible in your memory is set forth in Psalm 119:11, R. V. "*Thy word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.*" That is the proper thing to do with God's Word, lay it up in your heart. What is so worthy of being treasured in our minds as the golden words of God? Whoever has God's Word stored away in his mind has treasure vaults filled with pure gold. Our Lord Jesus, as part of His farewell message to His disciples in the wonderful

fourteenth chapter of John (R. V.) says in v. 21, “He that hath my commandments, *and keepeth them*, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him.” Do you not long to be one of those whom the Father and the Son peculiarly “love?” Do you not long to have the Lord Jesus “*manifest*” Himself to you? Well, these words tell you how to secure these priceless privileges, “He that hath my commandments, *and keepeth them*, *he* it is that loveth me: *and he* that loveth me *shall be loved of my Father*, and I will love *him*, and will manifest myself unto *him*.” To keep Christ’s words means more than simply to obey them; it means to treasure them, to hold on to them, to store them up in your mind and heart, or to use David’s phrase, “lay them up in your heart.” Then in John 14:23, Jesus says, “If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and *we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*” Is not that great, having the Father and the Son making their home with us? Well, it is through the treasured up Word that this is brought about. Just two suggestions about how to memorize scripture! *First, memorize it systematically.* Do not have a jumble of disjointed texts in your mind, but classified and associated texts. Association is the great secret of a retentive memory. Group your memorized passages together, classify them in a logical and

orderly way. Second, commit the verses to memory by chapter and verse.

VII. Study the Whole Bible

In the seventh place, *Study the Whole Bible*. That comes out in a very striking way in Luke 24:27, R.V., "And beginning *from Moses and from all the prophets*, he interpreted to them *in all the scriptures* the things concerning himself." We see that Jesus studied not merely parts or fragments of the Bible, but the whole Bible as far as He had it, "beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them *in all the scriptures* the things concerning himself." The whole Bible is the Word of God; therefore every part of the Bible should be studied. We not only need to know the mind of God, but *the whole mind of God*. One of the commonest causes of comparatively unprofitable Bible study is that only parts of the Bible are studied. Some only study pet books. Some study only the New Testament; some study only the Psalms; some never study Genesis; some never study prophecy, they never study Revelation and they never study Daniel. Others study nothing but Daniel or Revelation. Some study only pet subjects; some never study anything but Divine healing, and some never study Divine healing at all. Some never study the Second Coming of Christ and others never study anything but the Second Coming of Christ. You never

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rightly understand any one of the sixty-six books of the Bible until you study it in its relation to the other sixty-five. You never rightly understand any subject in the Bible until you understand it in its relation to other subjects in the Bible.

VIII. Study the Bible as the Word of God

In the eighth place, *Study the Bible as the Word of God*. This we are taught to do by God Himself in 1 Thess. 2:13, “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, *ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God*, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” We have already seen that the proper way to study any book is to study it as just what it is. Well, then it is clear as day that, as the Bible is the Word of God, the proper way to study it and the only proper way to study it, the only way to get the largest profit out of the study of it, is to study it *as the Word of God*. Many distinguished university professors say we should study the Bible just as we study any other book, and they fancy that they have said something wondrously wise when they have said it. But while it is partly true, it is very largely false; indeed, it is very largely abject nonsense. We should study the Bible as we study any other book to this extent, that we apply to it the same laws for

the discovery of the meaning of words and phrases and the same laws of grammatical construction that we apply to any other book; but there the principle ceases. We should study it as we study no other book, for it is what no other book is; it is God's Word and all other books are men's words, and we should study it as what it is, and we should study other books as what they are. So we should study the Bible and the Bible alone, as God's Word, and we should study every other book as men's word for that is exactly what they are. What is involved in studying the Bible as God's Word? Five things:

1. First, that *we believe absolutely its every statement*. We may not see how it can be true, but we should believe it just because God says it. Abraham could not see how he, when he was "about 100 years old" and Sarah nearly as old, and childless, could become "a father of many nations"; but God said so and Abraham believed it, and "God counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). If we have really good sense we will behave just like Abraham. God says something in this Book; Prof. So and So says it is not so, and the Rev. Dr. Bighead, D.D., Ph.D., LL.D., Litt.D., F.R.G.S., A. S. S., says it cannot be so; but as God says so, you and I, if we have real good sense, will believe it in spite of all the A.S.S.E.S. in the world.

2. In the second place, that *we bank unhesitatingly and without a trace of doubt or anxiety lest it fail us on its every promise in all its height and*

depth and length and breadth. I am only a frail and feeble man, but I expect every man to accept and rest absolutely upon every promise of mine. And God, who cannot lie (Tit. 1:2), not only expects that of you and me, He demands it, and you are a fool if you do not do it. A good many of the promises of this Book seem altogether too big to believe, but God made them and there is nothing too big for God, and not a promise in this Book ever went down yet, if you put both your feet upon it. I have found that out by 36 years of experience. This Book tells me that I am an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ; it promises me that I am to inherit all God is and all God has. It looks ridiculous to me, but I believe it. God says it and, therefore, I believe it. I would be a fool if I did not.

3. In the third place, *studying the Bible as the Word of God involves your obeying implicitly and exactly its every commandment that is addressed to you.* There are commandments in this Book that are not addressed to you: the Bible explicitly says that they are addressed to Jews and you are not a Jew. But there are many commandments that are addressed to you; obey every one of them to the last jot and tittle. It will seem hard sometimes but it will pay.

4. In the fourth place, *studying the Bible as the Word of God involves, studying it as God's message to you, studying it not as God's Word in the abstract, but God's Word in the concrete,*

God's Word to you. Forget everybody else for the time being and think of God as saying this thing to you. Oh, it is fine to have a talk with God and to have Him do the talking. He has so much more to say that is worth listening to than you or I have to say to him. I know a man out in China who has the rare gift of keeping his mouth shut in seven different languages. He is quite a young man but he has acquired a great reputation for sagacity because he so seldom says anything. He listens. But the place of places to keep still is when you are studying the Bible; keep still and listen and let God do the talking.

5. In the fifth place, *studying the Bible as the Word of God involves studying the Book as in the presence of God. See God standing right there saying these things which are written.* Have you never thought, when you have read how God came down and talked with Abraham face to face, that you wished He could come down and talk that way with you? Well, we have a privilege far beyond that of Abraham. It was only in a few very rare instances that God came down and met Abraham and talked with him, but God is ready to come down and meet us and talk with us face to face every time we open our Bibles. Oh, it is great to have God call you into His presence and say, "I have something I want to whisper right into your ear alone and into your heart," and then open your Bible and see God standing there and hear Him saying that which is written there in the Book

before your eyes. Studying the Bible that way makes the Bible a new and living Book. It is great to study the Bible on your knees. It has been one of the rarest privileges of my life to read every chapter in the Bible and every verse in the Bible on my knees. And it is your privilege to do the same.

IX. Study the Bible With a Will Wholly Surrendered to God

In the ninth place, *Study the Bible With a Will Wholly Surrendered to God*. That is one of the greatest secrets of proper and profitable Bible study. There is nothing that clears up *the mind* to see and understand what God says and what God means like *a will wholly surrendered to God*. Our Lord Jesus Himself teaches us that. He says in John 7:17, R. V., “*If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know* of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from myself.” The mind of the man whose will is not surrendered to God is a fogbank; the mind of the man whose will is surrendered to God is clear shining as a perfect California day. Oh, I have known men to whom the Bible was a sealed book, a useless book, a silly, stupid book, but by the unreserved surrender of their wills to God the Bible became an open book. The surrender of the will to God will do more to make the Bible an open book than a university

education at home and abroad in Greek and Hebrew and cognate languages. I have known great Greek scholars and great Hebrew scholars who were as blind as a bat to the real meaning of God's Word, simply because their wills were not surrendered to God; and I have known men and women who knew none of "the original languages" in which the Bible was written, neither the original Greek, nor the original Hebrew, only "the original English," who were open-eyed to all that was best and dearest in this Book because their wills were utterly surrendered to God. We had a young woman in the Bible Institute in Chicago years ago who seemed to have no fitness to be a student at a Bible Institute. She was entirely out of harmony with the place and densely ignorant of the things of God. One day she went (as all the women students were required to go now and then) down to one of the destitute parts of the City, calling from house to house upon the poor. She became utterly disgusted with the surroundings and quit her work and went down to the Lake Shore Drive and walked along in front of the magnificent mansions there and said to herself, "Now, this is what I like, and this is what I am going to have. I am thoroughly sick of Milton Ave. and Townsend St. This for me." In that rebellious state of mind she returned to the Institute and the bell soon rang for supper. She went down and took her seat at the table, still re-

bellng at the thought of a life of sacrifice amid unpleasant surroundings. But suddenly, there at the supper-table, she surrendered her will to God, sprang from the table, rushed over to one of the other girls, threw her arms around her and said, "I am a volunteer for Africa." A wonderful transformation and a wonderful opening of her mind to the things of God occurred instantly. I was away when it all happened, but when I came back my secretary told me about it; for it was the talk of the school. A little later in the day as I passed out of the gate on La Salle Avenue I met her just coming in. She looked up radiantly into my face and said, "Oh, Mr. Torrey, have you heard the news?" I said, "Yes, Jack, Miss Waite has told me." Then she fairly danced in holy glee on the sidewalk as she poured out her glad heart, and then she said, "Oh, Mr. Torrey, the most wonderful thing about it is that the Bible is a new Book. I thought the Bible was the most stupid book in the world. I would rather have read an old almanac than the Bible. You did compel me by your lectures at Northfield to believe in the Deity of Christ, but the Bible I could not endure. But oh, since I surrendered my will, what a wonderful Book the Bible is; God is making marvelous revelations to me from it every day." Oh, men and women, if you want a Bible that is wonderful, a Bible whose every page glows with glory, study it with a will absolutely surrendered to God.

X. Study the Bible to Learn How to Live Your Daily Life, and Live Your Daily Life That Way

In the tenth place, *Study the Bible to Learn How to Live Your Daily Life, and Live Your Daily Life That Way*. God commands us to do this in James 1:22. He says, “Be ye *doers* of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own-selves.” Very many study the Bible, yes, dig into it, spend hours with it, just to gratify their curiosity on the great subjects of which the Bible treats, or to qualify themselves to be expert theological disputants. No, no, no, study the Bible to find out how to live so as to please God, and live that way. Studying the Bible with an eager desire to learn how to please God, and living that way, goes a long way toward making the Bible an open book. People often ask, what is the best translation of the original scriptures, the Authorized Version, or the Revised Version, or Weymouth’s, or whose translation? Listen, infinitely the best translation of the Bible is the translation into daily living.

XI. Study the Bible Under the Holy Spirit’s Personal Direction

In the eleventh place, *Study the Bible Under the Holy Spirit’s Personal Direction*. God tells us in 1 Cor. 2:14: “But the natural man receiveth not

the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are *spiritually* discerned.” Do not study the Bible as the Christian Scientist studies it, through Mrs. Eddy’s spectacles, under bondage to “Science and Health.” Mrs. Eddy’s spectacles are badly smoked glasses. Do not study the Bible as Pastor Russell’s dupes study it, through that silly man’s spectacles, trying to see the Bible with “Millennial Dawn” standing between you and the Book of God itself. Do not study it as the Mormon studies it, looking at the Bible through the densely opaque medium of the ridiculous and immoral Book of Mormon, apparently gotten up originally as a joke by a back-sliding Presbyterian preacher, Solomon Spaulding. “Call no man master” (Matt. 23:10). Do not study it through any man’s spectacles; study it through the telescope and microscope of the Holy Spirit. Study it under the personal direction of the Holy Spirit. The way to obtain His personal direction in your study of the Bible we are told in Ps. 119:18, R. V.: “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.” It is by asking for it. “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to *them that ask Him*” (Luke 11:13). We are also told in Luke 24:45, R. V., “Then opened *He* their mind, that they might understand the scriptures.”

XII. *Study the Bible with a Child-like Mind*

In the twelfth place, *Study the Bible with a Child-like Mind.* That is the only proper way to study the Bible, for the Bible is a *revelation* intended by God to be understood by all honest-minded, humble-minded, teachable people. Many very scholarly men study the Bible as if it were a puzzle book; instead of taking the meaning that lies on the surface, they dig down for some occult meaning, some meaning other than what the words seem to imply. The Roman Catholic Church says that simple-minded Christians must not dare to study the Bible for themselves independently—they must go to the priest to interpret it for them; and the Chicago University says that ordinary, “unscholarly” regenerate men, women and children cannot get the Bible’s real meaning for themselves, they must have some great scholar, soaked in the German infidelity of Wellhausen and Graf and their host of satellites and followers, to interpret it for them. *But Jesus said, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.”* (Matt. 11:25.) Oh, these ingenious and fantastic interpretations of cunning “scholars,” men who are so subtle that they are positively silly! They would be laughable if they were not outrageous. Some men’s erudition is very close to perdition. The

little girl was right when she said, "If God didn't mean what He said, why didn't He say what He meant?" He does say what He means, exactly what He means.

XIII. Study the Bible Systematically

Once more, *Study the Bible Systematically*. It is very clear from Luke 24:27, R. V. that Jesus so studied it, for we read: "And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." Have some good system of Bible study and follow it. System counts in everything, but it counts more in study than it counts in anything else: and it counts more in Bible study than in any other form of study. I have not time here to go into the details of systems or methods of Bible study.

Let me add just one word, *improve spare moments for Bible study*. Carry a Bible with you wherever you go, or at least a New Testament, and wherever you have a spare moment, put it into Bible study. *But do not rest content with the use of spare moments in Bible study; have a regular set time every day that is kept sacredly for getting alone with God in the study of His Word.*

CHAPTER III

HOW TO INTERPRET THE BIBLE SO AS TO FIND ITS TRUE MEANING

“For we are not as the many, *corrupting the Word of God*: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.”—2 Cor. 2:17, R.V.

“Therefore seeing we have this ministry, even as we obtained mercy, we faint not: (2) but we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, *nor handling the Word of God deceitfully*; but by the manifestation of the truth commanding ourselves to every mans conscience in the sight of God. (3) And even if our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that perish: (4) in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them.”—2 Cor. 4:1-4, R.V.

“Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, *handling aright the word of truth.*”—2 Tim. 2:15, R.V.

“*The Devil . . . saith unto him, . . . it is written.*”—Matt. 4:5-7.

My subject this morning is, *How to Interpret the Bible so as to Find its True Meaning*. I have four texts. The first is 2 Cor. 2:17, R. V.: “*For we are not as the many, corrupting the word of God*: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.” The word translated “*corrupting*” in this verse is the participle of a verb derived from a noun meaning “a tavern keeper, or a wine merchant, a petty retailer, a huckster, a peddler,” and the thought is that as tavern keepers and wine merchants and

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peddlers frequently adulterate their wines or fruits, or other wares, so many alleged teachers of the Word of God adulterate the Word of God. That is certainly true of not a few preachers and "Bible teachers" and "theological professors" in America and elsewhere in these days. Paul says he was not in that contemptible disreputable business; and we ought to be careful that we are not when we teach or when we study God's word.

Our second text is 2 Cor. 4:1-4: "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, even as we obtained mercy, we faint not: but we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, *nor handling the word of God deceitfully*; but *by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God*. *And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that perish (are perishing): in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them.*" The word translated "*handling deceitfully*" in these verses means to "*corrupt*" as metals are debased or wine adulterated, and the thought is that of debasing the pure gold of God's Word, or adulterating the pure wine of God's Word, by mingling with it false ideas. That too is a common practice to-day. Paul says that he has "*renounced the hidden things of shame*" and that he is "*not walking in (theological) craftiness (cunning or subtlety)*"—it is evi-

dent that he had not had the advantage of an education in some of our American institutions—and that he was not debasing the pure gold of “the Word of God” or adulterating the pure wine of the “Word of God” by mixing in his own preconceived notions. Here too *we also* greatly need to be on our guard when we study or teach the “Word of God.”

Our third text is 2 Tim. 2:15: “*Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth.*” The Authorized Version, as you know, reads, “*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*” The Greek word Paul actually used means, “*cutting straight,*” and that would be a better way to translate it here than the way in which it is rendered in either the Authorized Version or the Revised Version. Then the verse would read “*Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, cutting straight the word of truth.*” I tell you there is a lot of crooked cutting nowadays when men come to the study and interpretation of the Word of God, especially when they find something they do not wish to believe. Some years ago, a friend of mine passed by a carpenter and joiner’s shop in a Southern city. Over the door was this sign, “*All sorts of twisting and turning done here.*” That would be a fine sign to put over the door of some of

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our theological seminaries, and many of our pulpits and Bible classes, and many a room where Christians are studying the Word of God alone; and each one of *us* needs to be very much on our guard that this may not be an appropriate sign to be put over the door of the room where we study our Bible alone. Remember, as you study the Bible that it is God's Word and be sure to "cut it straight." My fourth text is Matt. 4:5-7, "The devil . . . saith unto Him, . . . it is written." You see from this passage that the devil can quote scripture and interpret or misinterpret scripture, and argue from what "is written" in the Book of God. If you think he has quit the business, read "Pastor" Russell's "Millennial Dawn," or Mrs. Eddy's "Science and Health," or some of the productions of the "American Institute of Sacred Literature" or the Chicago University, or some of the Sunday School helps sent out by some of our denominational Boards. But I would not advise you to spend much time on this evidently devil-inspired trash.

It is not enough to study the Bible, nor even to spend several hours in Bible study daily. We must seek diligently to "*cut it straight.*" We must find out how to interpret the Bible so as to find its true meaning, so as to discover just what God meant to teach by each verse we study: and then interpret it that way in every instance. Of many passages of scripture there are several possible meanings; one man says it means one

thing and another man says it means another thing. Now God intends only one of these meanings. We should seek to find out not what men say it means, even good men, but what God intended it to teach. Is there any way in which ordinary men like you and me can tell to a certainty which interpretation of several possible interpretations of a passage is the right interpretation, the exact meaning God intended to convey? There is. *There are certain Laws of Interpretation that will enable you to know in at least almost every instance just what is the true interpretation of every verse in the Bible, what is the true sense of the passage, just what God wishes to teach.* I shall endeavor to state these laws so you can all understand them and then apply them for yourselves.

I. Get Absolutely Right with God Yourself by the Absolute Surrender of Your Will to God

The first great law of correct Bible interpretation, which will be recognized as a law of God by any fair-minded person who gives it a few minutes' consideration, is *Get Absolutely Right with God Yourself by the Absolute Surrender of Your Will to Him.* The only man who is at all competent to interpret the will of God is the man who is in harmony with God, and the only man who is in harmony with God is the man whose will is fully surrendered to God. If you are not right with

God yourself, you certainly are not competent to say what God means by any passage in His Word. Our Lord Jesus Himself says this in John 7:17, R. V., “*If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know* of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself.” Nothing else so clears up our minds to understand the Word of God as the surrender of our wills to God. The will is the eye of the soul. Our Lord says that also. He says in Matt. 6:22, 23, R. V., “*The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.*” And it is clear from the next verse that by a “single eye” He means a will fully surrendered to God. His words are, “*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other.*” If your will is surrendered to God and to Him alone, your “eye” is “single,” and your “whole body full of light.” But if your will is not fully surrendered to God and Him alone, your “eye” is “evil” and your whole person is “full of darkness.” Nothing else gives us such a clear eye to discern, as we read God’s Word, just what God means, as an entirely surrendered will. A surrendered will will do more to qualify any one to be a competent and dependable interpreter of the Word of God than the fullest possible university course in Greek and Hebrew and the cognate languages. As I said last Sun-

day, I have known great Greek scholars and great Hebrew scholars and men deeply versed in the cognate languages who were blind as a bat to the real meaning of the scriptures because they lacked that clearness of spiritual vision that comes only from a surrendered will. And on the other hand I have known very ordinary and quite uneducated men and women, men and women with no pretensions whatever to scholarship, who had a wonderful understanding of the meaning of God's Word because their wills were surrendered to God. We get this same principle of Bible interpretation from Psalm 25:14: "The secret (or, the friendship) of Jehovah is *with them that fear Him*; and he will show *them* His covenant." The same thought is found in Prov. 3:32, "The froward is an abomination to Jehovah: but *his secret* is with *the righteous*." A closely similar thought is found in our Lord's last words to His disciples on the night before His crucifixion, in John 15:15, R. V.: "No longer do I call *you* servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called *you* friends; for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known *unto you*."

The first great principle of Biblical interpretation is then, that the *one who would interpret the Bible must himself be in harmony with the Author of the Book by the surrender of his will to God*. Every theological professor whose will is not fully surrendered to God, should be turned out of the chair he occupies in any Seminary or University.

When Mr. Alexander and I were holding meetings in a university city in England, Mr. Alexander was invited out to dinner by one of the most prominent officers in one of the theological schools connected with the university. This man, who was a fine man in many ways, took exception to some of our teachings. He accompanied Mr. Alexander after dinner out to his carriage, and as they stood by the carriage and had a few earnest parting words Mr. Alexander put the question straight to him, "Have you ever made a full surrender of your will to God?" This prominent theological university teacher very frankly and gently said to Mr. Alexander, "No, Mr. Alexander, I have not." That accounted for his misunderstanding of the Word of God, and the same thing accounts for the misunderstanding of the Word of God on the part of a great many students of the Word to-day. See to it that you are not blinded in a similar way to the real meaning of God's Word. Unless you fulfill this first great law of correct Bible Interpretation it will not help you to fulfill the other laws. You will get nowhere in your study of the Word.

II. Be Determined to Find Out Just What God Intended to Teach and Not What You Wish Him to Teach

The second principle of correct Bible interpretation is, *Be Determined to Find Out Just What God Intended to Teach and Not What You Wish*

Him to Teach. One great reason why many do not find out the true meaning of God's words is because they do not really wish to find out the true meaning of God's words, but they wish to find some way in which they can force God's words into harmony with their own notions. Many men and women see in the Bible just what they wish to see in the Bible. This is the cause of the blinding of the eyes of many. Some one asked me the other day, "Why cannot the Jews see that their own Old Testament Scriptures predicted a suffering Messiah, who should make atonement for sin by His death and that Jesus is that Messiah? It is so plain." The answer is simple, because they do not wish to. And I asked the person who asked me this question another question, "Why do not Christians to-day see that there are other predictions in the Old Testament just as plain and far more of them, that the Messiah is coming as an all-conquering King to rule the nations with a rod of iron, that Jesus, the true Messiah, is coming again?" The answer to that is just as simple—because they do not wish to.

There was a time many years ago when I was so certain that all men would ultimately be saved and the devil too, and was so determined to establish that doctrine, that I interpreted everything I found in the Bible on the subject of future punishment in the light, or rather in the darkness, of that determination of mine, to make the Bible square with my own view, which I reasoned out

philosophically and was ready to defend against all comers. But when I reached the point where I desired not only to make the Bible square with my philosophical arguments for universal salvation, but to find out just what God really taught, I easily found just what God did teach; and my universal salvation arguments evaporated into thin air. We must all of us be on our guard at this point, that in absolute honesty we have but one wish and that is *to find out just what God means by the verse we are studying* and that only, no matter how much it may conflict with our previous ideas.

III. Get the Most Accurate Text

The third principle of correct Bible interpretation is, *Get the Most Accurate Text to Interpret*. It is the original manuscripts of the Bible that are the very Word of God. Now we do not have the original MSS. of the Bible. We have many MSS. but not one of them is the original. There are many variations in the MSS. which we possess. But by a comparison of the very many MSS. we have of the various parts of the Bible—and we have far, far more MSS. of the books of the Bible than of any other ancient book—we can come very close to the original texts as they came from the hands of Paul and John and Matthew and the rest of the writers of the books of the Old and New Testaments. Indeed we have now what is to all practical intents and purposes what is the original

text as it came from the hand of the original writers of the various books of the Bible. It is wonderful when one thinks of it, when we remember how old these books are and how often they were copied and how very many MSS. we have and the advances in scholarship, especially in textual criticism, that have been made in the time between when the Authorized Version was published 310 years ago in 1611 and when the Revised Version was published only a few years ago, in 1881 (The N. T.), that there are so few differences of real importance between the Authorized Version and the Revised Version. *There is not one single doctrine of any vital importance affected in the least by the variations between the two versions*, not one. That is amazing and shows the wonderful providential care with which God guarded His own written word. But there are slight differences and, of course, we wish the exact mind of God and, as that is found in the original MSS., we therefore desire and should seek the purest text, the most exact text, the text which is closest to the original MSS. There can be no honest question that, taken all in all, the Revised Version presents a text more nearly exactly the same as that of the original MSS. than the Authorized Version. So, though for many reasons the Authorized Version is the better for the general reading of the average Christian, nevertheless, every one who wishes to find the exact words of God should have and should study the Revised

Version. There is one glaring misrendering in the Revised Version. It is found in 2 Tim. 3:16. The Revised Version reads, "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness," putting the "is" after the "inspired of God" instead of before it as in the Authorized Version. There is absolutely no warrant for this change. It is utterly indefensible. It should read "Every scripture is inspired of God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." But the fault in that case is not in the Greek text upon which the Revised Version is built, but upon the translation of the text. There is no question about the Greek text even in this case. Many uncertainties about the meaning of various passages in the Bible would be easily settled if we would just look at the more correct text as given in the Revised Version. Take as an illustration, 1 Thess. 5:22. The Authorized Version renders this "abstain from all appearance of evil;" the R. V. renders it "abstain from every form of evil." While the *Greek* text King James translators and the revisers used is the same, there is no room for doubt that the English text in the Revised Version gives the true sense of the Greek text better than the Authorized Version. We are not so much to "abstain from the *appearance* of evil" but from what is actually evil, and from what is actually evil in

every form *in which it appears*, "every form of evil."

IV. Find Out the Most Exact and Literal Meaning of the Text

The fourth principle of correct Bible interpretation is, *Find Out the Most Exact and Literal Meaning of the Text*. It is one of the most firmly established principles of law in England and in America that "a law stands as it is written," i. e., that a law means exactly what it says and is to be interpreted and enforced *just as it reads*. This is just as good a principle for interpreting the Bible as for interpreting law. If Shailer Mathews and the rest of the higher critics and "new theology" men were practicing law and should try in any court of justice to interpret laws as they interpret the Bible, they would be laughed out of court. It is no wonder that the one who has done more to prick the iridescent soap bubbles of the higher critics and new theology men than almost any one else was a brilliant lawyer, knighted by King Edward for his eminent legal talents, my late intimate and beloved friend, Sir Robert Anderson. The primary meaning of any passage of Scripture, just as the meaning of any law on our statute books, is the literal meaning, unless it is perfectly plain from the context or from other scripture or from the manifestly figurative character of the passage that something else than the literal sense is intended.

Those who do not wish in any particular case to accept what God actually says, including some who really are scholars, who ought to know better, often take refuge from the plain meaning of a text by saying, "Oh, but you know 'the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life,'" by which they mean the literal sense of a passage, the interpretation that takes God as meaning just what He says, kills, but a "spiritual" interpretation, i. e., an interpretation that makes God mean something He does not say, gives life. If any one will look up Paul's words, "the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. 3:6, R. V.) in their context, he will see that Paul never dreamed of such an interpretation or application of his words as these men give to them. It is clear as day from the context that what Paul meant was that the mere written letter, "written with ink" (v. 3) or engraven "in tables of stone" killed, but the Word of God written "with the Spirit of the living God" on our hearts ("in tables that are hearts of flesh") gives life. These men who thus misuse 2 Cor. 3:6 call those who hold fast to the actual literal meaning of the words "deadly literalists." But if that kind of literalism is "deadly," then Paul himself, the very one who wrote these words, was one of the most "deadly literalists" the world has ever known; for Paul constantly insisted upon the literal meaning of words and would build an argument upon the tense, number or case of a word used. A very distinguished Hebrew scholar, a

professor in a leading American theological seminary, once tried to work this interpretation of 2 Cor. 3:6 on me. In a friendly discussion I had driven him into a corner by quoting a plain statement of God's Word. He could not escape, but tried to by the subterfuge of saying, "But you know 'the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life.'" I replied, "Now Professor, do you really think that is what Paul means by those words?" And he frankly said, "No, I know it is not."

Another very easy and very common way of reading out of the Bible what God has put into it, is for men to say when they are driven into a corner by some plain passage that they do not wish to believe, "Oh, that is figurative," by which they mean it does not mean what it says, but you can take it to mean whatever you like. That is a very common way nowadays with the post-millennialists of reading out of the Bible what God so plainly says in it about the personal, visible, bodily, imminent coming again of our Lord Jesus. It is outrageous trickery, unworthy of any one who has sense enough to subordinate his own crude and fallible opinions to the plain teaching and infinite wisdom of God's Word. When statements are plainly figurative, of course, interpret them as figures, but even then remember that figures stand for facts, and that God's figures never overstate the facts, and never misinterpret the facts, and that *an honest man's figures never mean just the opposite of what they seem to teach.*

The most plain and obvious meaning of any passage in the Bible is always to be preferred to a subtle and ingenious one; for the Bible was written for plain, honest-minded, humble-minded, common folk and not for a few sublimated mystics. Did not Jesus Himself say, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou *didst hide these things from the wise and understanding*, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight?” (Matt. 11:25, 26, R. V.). Well, do not forget it. A man who really was a great scholar once said at a Bible Conference, “I think the best method of Bible study is *the baby method*,” by which he meant just what Jesus Christ means here, that God reveals His truth to the humble, teachable mind, to the one who comes to Him as a babe. Remember how Jesus said again, “Except ye be converted and *become as little children*, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 18:3.)

V. Note the Exact Force of Each Word Used

The fifth principle of correct Bible interpretation is, *Note the Exact Force of Each Word Used*. Remember that the Bible is God’s Word and that God always says exactly what He means, no more, no less. Remember that the Bible is verbally inspired; i. e., that the Holy Spirit, the unerring Spirit of God led the Bible writers in the choice of every word they wrote, led them to write the

word that exactly expressed what was in the mind of God, or, as Paul puts it, “Which things also we speak, *not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth*, but *which the Spirit teacheth*; combining spiritual things with *spiritual words*.” (1 Cor. 2:13, R. V.). *Note every word and the exact force of every word.* Take, for example, Rev. 2:10: “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.” Now this is constantly interpreted as meaning that we are saved by being faithful unto death, but it does not say so. It says, “Be thou faithful unto death, and *I will give thee the crown of life*.” It tells us, not the way to be saved, but the way to obtain the crown. Take Luke 6:30, R. V., “Give to every one that asketh thee.” This is constantly interpreted as if it meant “Give to every one that asketh thee, *just what he asks*,” but it does not say so; it says, “Give to every one that asketh,” but does not specify what to give to him. And it means exactly and literally what it says. It is far better to give some men advice than it is to give them money. The whole context shows we are to take God as our example in our giving and in all else that we do, and while God gives to every one that asks, He certainly does not always give even to His own children, the very thing we have asked. Take Eph. 4:30, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed *unto the day of redemption*.” This is constantly interpreted as meaning that we are not to “grieve away the Holy Spirit.” But it does not

say so. So far from teaching us that we can grieve away the Holy Spirit, it tells us in the last part of the verse that we cannot, “in whom ye were sealed *unto the day of redemption.*” But while we cannot grieve Him away, if we are children of God, we can grieve Him, and alas, we do.

VI. Interpret the Words Used in Any Verse According to Bible Usage

The sixth great principle of correct Bible interpretation is, *Interpret the Words Used in Any Verse According to the Bible Usage of those words.* Some people when they find any word in the Bible, run off for Webster’s Dictionary or the Standard Dictionary to find out just what the word means. No, go to the Bible. Take your concordance and look up every passage in which the word in question is used and you will have God’s definition of its meaning. For example, take the word “death.” In Rom. 6:23 we read, “For the wages of sin is *death*; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” What does “death” mean here? Many run off to a dictionary and decide it means “cessation of existence,” but take your Bible and concordance and go through the Bible and you will find it means nothing of the kind in the Bible. God Himself defines the “death” which is the ultimate result of sin in Rev. 21:8: “But the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and

whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars, shall have their part in *the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*" A man came into my office in Minneapolis. This text was hanging among others upon the wall and he read, "*The wages of sin is death,*" and then turned to me and said, "Do you believe that?" I knew the man was an annihilationist and said, "Yes, sir, I believe it, but do you know what 'death' means?" and then I took my Bible and showed him that his understanding of the word "death" was not the Bible meaning and I think I convinced him of his error. Take the word "sanctify," a word of very frequent occurrence in the Bible. Many define the word for themselves and take it to mean, "to make absolutely holy in character," and build up a whole system of theology, and an utterly false system of theology, on their wrong definition. If they would take their Bibles and concordances and look up every one of the very many passages in the Bible where this word is used, they would find that the primary meaning of "to sanctify" is "to set apart for God," and so they would find that the Bible teaching on this exceedingly precious and important subject of sanctification is entirely different from what they suppose. Just so with the word "justify" and a multitude of other words. When you are in doubt as to the exact meaning of any word in the Bible, take your concordance and look up

every verse in the Bible where this word is used and you will see just what the word means.

VII. Interpret the Words of Each Author in the Bible With a Regard to the Particular Usage of That Author

The seventh principle of correct Bible interpretation is closely connected with the sixth. It is, *Interpret the Words of Each Author in the Bible with a Regard to the Particular Usage of That Author*. While God is the real Author of every book in the Bible, He used the individual personality of each man He employed to write the various books which make up His own Word. So we should find how the particular writer that we are studying uses any word. For example, James does not use the words "faith" and "believe" in the exact sense Paul uses them, nor in the exact sense in which John uses them. When James talks about "believing" he means a mere intellectual conviction of the truth, and so he says, "the demons also believe, and shudder" (James 2:19, R. V.). Paul speaks of "believing" as a conviction that governs a man's whole inner life, his intellect, his emotions, and his will; so he says in Rom. 10:9, 10, R. V.: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and *shalt believe in thy heart* that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth

confession is made unto salvation." And he said to the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:31, R. V., "*Believe* on the Lord Jesus, and *thou shalt* be saved." John, too, when he speaks of "believing" means a conviction to which a man utterly, unreservedly and gladly surrenders himself. So he says in John 20:31, R. V., "These are written, that ye may *believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name." And he says in 1 John 5:1: "*Whosoever believeth* that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God;" and four verses farther down, "*Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.*"

VIII. Interpret Individual Verses With a Regard to the Context

The eighth principle of correct Bible interpretation is, *Interpret Individual Verses with a Regard to the Context*. Many a verse might mean two or three or more different things if it stood alone, without any setting; but in the connection in which it is found in the Bible, taking note of what goes before and what comes after, it cannot mean but one of these three or four different things. So we must notice carefully what comes before the verse we are studying and what comes after it, if we are to find out the exact meaning of the verse before us. For example, take Acts 2:39, R. V., "*For to you is the promise, and to your*

children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him.” Now what is “the promise” to which reference is made in this passage? Some say it is the promise of salvation; others say it is the promise to the individual of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Which is right? If the verse stood alone either one might be right. But when we look at it in its context, only one is seen to be the true sense. Read the verse that goes immediately before, “And Peter said unto them, Repent ye and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and *ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*” Then he goes on immediately to say, “*For unto you is the promise*”—what promise? The promise, of course, of which he has just spoken, “the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Take John 14:18, R. V.: “I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you.” To what coming does this refer, to the Second Coming of Christ, or to His coming in the Holy Spirit to dwell in their hearts? It might mean either, *if it stood alone*. But if you will read the two verses that immediately precede and the five verses immediately following, you will see it refers to His coming in the Holy Spirit to dwell in their hearts. He says in the verses that immediately precede, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth Him not, neither

knoweth him: ye know him; for he abideth with you, and shall be in you." Then He says, "I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you." This becomes even clearer in the verses that follow where He speaks of the coming of the Holy Spirit in which He will manifest Himself to them and will come and make His abode with them.

IX. Interpret Individual Passage in the Light of Parallel or Related Passages

The ninth principle of correct Biblical interpretation is, *Interpret Individual Passages in the Light of Parallel or Related Passages*. The meaning of many passages in the Gospels whose meaning seems doubtful would be settled at once if one would only read the parallel passages in another Gospel. Take for example, Luke 14: 26, 27, R. V.: "If any man cometh unto me, *and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also*, he cannot be my disciple. Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Now that looks hard. It has puzzled more people than almost any other passage in the Bible. But turn to the parallel passage, Matt. 10:37, 38, and it is all cleared up. "He that loveth father or mother *more than me* is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that doth not take his cross and follow after

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me, is not worthy of me." So it is evident that our Lord Jesus used the word "hate" in Luke 14:26, 27 in a sense in which it is used a number of times in the Bible, as a comparatively less love. Our love for God should be so immeasurably superior to our love to even the dearest of our earthly relatives that in comparison with our love to God our attitude toward them should be like *aversion*, or *turning away from* them.

Take John 14:3, R. V., "I will come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Now our Lord might refer to His coming again to receive us at death, or He might refer to His Second Coming. To which does He refer? Another passage clearly and unmistakably answers the question, 1 Thess. 4:16, 17, R. V.: "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." There are four points in each statement; they exactly cover one another and make it clear that Paul's words are an inspired commentary on our Lord's words. Jesus says, "I will come again;" Paul says, "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." Jesus says, "And *will receive you unto myself*;" Paul says, "We . . . shall be

caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." Jesus says, "*That where I am, there ye may be also;*" Paul says, "*So shall we ever be with the Lord.*" Jesus says in introducing this promise, "*Let not your heart be troubled;*" Paul says in closing, "*Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*" Take Matt. 13:33, R. V.: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened." Now some say this means that the Kingdom of God, the truth of God and the Gospel of God, are going to gradually grow and spread until they pervade the whole world. Others say that the leaven represents the corrupt doctrine, that the woman, an apostate church, mixes in the children's bread and which multiplies like the yeast germs until the whole life and doctrine of the church is leavened. Which is right? Turn to 1 Cor. 5:6-8, R. V., and you get God's answer to this important question: "*Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?* Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are unleavened. For our passover also hath been sacrificed: wherefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." This is an inspired commentary on our Lord's words and makes it as clear as day that the "leaven" refers to corruption, error and sin.

The Bible itself is the very best commentary on

the Bible. There is not a doubtful or difficult passage in the Bible anywhere that some other passage does not clear up and explain, if we seek long enough for it. The best book to help you in finding these other passages that clear up uncertainties and solve difficulties is the "Treasury of Scripture Knowledge." Of several possible explanations of a passage, choose the one in harmony with the general teaching or trend of the Bible. If any one received a letter from me that had a statement in it that was capable of two interpretations, one of which was in harmony with the general trend of my letter and my other writings, and one of which was utterly at variance with the general trend of my letter and with my other writings, he would not hesitate for one moment to give that interpretation that was in harmony with the general teaching and trend of my letter and of my other writings, and just so we ought to act in interpreting the Bible. This does not mean that we are to distort and twist a passage out of its obvious meaning so there may be no apparent contradiction between it and some other clear passage in the Bible. One of the most vicious principles of Bible interpretation is that we must reconcile every passage with the teaching of every other passage. As the Bible is the revelation of an infinite mind that presents all sides of the truth, it is inevitable that there should be in it two lines of truth which it is perfectly easy to reconcile in a mind of infinite wisdom, but which we in

our limitations of thought and onesidedness of thought, cannot reconcile at all. So, for example, we are not to try to explain away the clear teaching of the Word of God as to the sovereignty of God on the one hand, nor the clear teaching of the Word of God as to the freedom of the human will on the other hand. But if there are several very easily possible interpretations of a passage and one fits in more harmoniously with the general teaching and trend of the Bible than the other, that is the one to be accepted.

X. Interpret Obscure Passages in the Light of Passages That Are Perfectly Plain

The tenth principle of correct Biblical interpretation is, *Interpret Obscure Passages in the Light of Passages that are Perfectly Plain*. Many do just the opposite thing. There will be a number of passages, the meaning of which is as plain as day. There will be another passage which is more or less obscure, and they will ignore all these perfectly plain passages and try to explain them away in the uncertain light of the obscure passage. Just the other procedure would be the rational one. Take, for example, 1 Cor. 9:27, R. V.: "I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected" (rather, be disapproved). Now this might seem to imply a fear on Paul's part that even after his faithful work he

might be lost (taking the exact force of the words and looking up their Biblical usage, we find that the verse even when taken alone cannot possibly teach this), but there are numerous passages in the Bible which make it plain as day that Paul entertained no fear whatever of such a character. He says in 2 Tim. 1:12, R. V.: “For which cause I suffer also these things: yet I am not ashamed; for *I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day.*” And he says in 2 Tim. 4:18, R. V., “*The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be the glory for ever and ever.*” And our Lord Jesus Christ distinctly said in John 10:28, R. V., “*I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.*” And in 1 John 2:19, R. V., John says, “*They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they all are not of us,*” thus distinctly teaching that when one is really born again he will not fall away.

XI. Interpret Any Passage in the Bible as Those Who Were Addressed Would Have Understood It

The eleventh principle of correct Biblical interpretation is, *Interpret Any Passage in the Bible as Those Who Were Addressed Would Have*

Understood It. Words that were addressed to any people were intended to be understood *by them*. There may be exceptions to this principle, but they are rare. An illustration of an exception is found in John 2:19, R. V., where he says, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." John tells us Jesus was speaking of the temple of His body, but the Jews would not have so understood it. In this case our Lord Jesus was not speaking for the present moment but for the days that were to come. This John explains in the 22nd verse where he says, "*When therefore he was raised from the dead*, his disciples remembered that He spake this; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said."

In interpreting the Bible we need to have a knowledge of the times and places and customs where the words were spoken. For example, our Lord said to Peter in Matt. 16:19, R. V., "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Now this was perfectly understood by those to whom he said it, because they knew the customs of the day. When one graduated from one of the Rabbinical classes, he was given by the Rabbi a "key" to indicate that he was now ready to open the secrets of the kingdom; and so our Lord promised to Peter "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" to indicate that Peter would be able to open the truth

of the kingdom of heaven to men. We see Peter using the keys with the Jews on the day of Pentecost and with the Gentiles in the household of Cornelius. There was another well-known usage of the day that explains the remainder of the verse. The words "bind and loose" were used constantly of the Rabbis as referring to "forbidding and permitting." For example, Shammai, a very strict Rabbi, was said to "bind," or "forbid" what Hillel, a more generous and liberal Rabbi, was said to "loose," or "permit."

*XII. Interpret What Belongs to the Christian,
as Belonging to the Christian; What Belongs
to the Jew, as Belonging to the Jew, and
What Belongs to the Gentiles, as
Belonging to the Gentiles*

The twelfth principle of correct Biblical interpretation is, *Interpret What Belongs to the Christian, as Belonging to the Christian, What Belongs to the Jew, as Belonging to the Jew, and What Belongs to the Gentiles, as Belonging to the Gentiles.* One of the commonest causes of misinterpretation of the Bible is the taking what is said, or what applies, to one class of people and applying it to another class. Take, for example, Rom. 8:35, R. V., "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or

sword?" Now this is distinctly said, as the context clearly shows, of the believer, of the one who is "foreordained," "called," "justified." Many take it as teaching that nothing can separate anybody "from the love of Christ." It teaches nothing of the kind.

XIII. Interpret Each Writer with a View to the Opinions the Writer Opposed

The thirteenth principle of correct Biblical interpretation is, *Interpret Each Writer with a View to the Opinions the Writer Opposed*. That is to say, in interpreting Paul, when he is opposing the Judaizing tendencies in certain circles of his day, we should bear that in mind in interpreting his epistles; for example, in interpreting the Epistle to the Romans and the Epistle to the Galatians. When we are interpreting James, we should bear in mind that he was opposing the antinomians of his day, those who taught that if a man believed correctly about Christ, he was under no moral obligations, he could live as he pleased and yet be a saved man. In interpreting John in his First Epistle, we should bear in mind that he was opposing the gnostics of his day who were degrading Christianity by combining it with a fantastic philosophy, very like to the philosophy of "Christian Science," and in some forms of Gnosticism the philosophy of "Theosophy."

XIV. Interpret Poetry as Poetry and Interpret Prose as Prose

The fourteenth principle of correct Biblical interpretation is, *Interpret Poetry as Poetry, and Interpret Prose as Prose*. For example, in interpreting the 18th Psalm, we should bear in mind that it is largely highly poetical, a remarkably vivid, poetic description of a thunderstorm in which God put forth His power in defense of His servant. The highly poetical character of the Psalm should be kept in mind in interpreting the Psalm; for example, the 8th verse, "There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it." Now this is not to be taken literally as representing God as a Being out of whose nose literally there poured forth smoke and fire out of His mouth. It is a wonderfully vivid and highly poetical description of a thunderstorm. Some people have no poetic sense and do everything in a matter-of-fact way. The story is told of a man of this hopelessly prosaic type of mind who read the well-known verse, "There are books in brooks, sermons in stones and good in everything," and he at once made this criticism "that is not what the writer meant to say. What he meant to say was that there are sermons in books, stones in brooks and good in everything." Poetry should be interpreted as poetry. That is not to say it does not mean what it says, but it says it in a figurative way

and sometimes in a vividly pictorial way, that represents an idea by a picture.

But while we interpret poetry as poetry, we should interpret prose as prose. It is just as grave a breach of every sensible law of interpretation to interpret prose as poetry as it is to interpret poetry as prose. This is one of the outstanding faults of many of the so-called "modern" interpreters of the Bible. They find a statement in the Bible that is evidently prose, but it contains a truth they do not wish to accept and they at once say, "this is figurative." They criticize those "stupid" people who interpret poetry as prose but do not realize they are open to just as grave criticism for interpreting prose as poetry.

XV. The Holy Spirit Is the Best Interpreter of the Bible

The fifteenth principle of correct Biblical interpretation is, *The Holy Spirit Is the Best Interpreter of the Bible*. The best interpreter of any book is the author of the book, and the Holy Spirit is beyond any honest question the Author of the Bible: "no prophecy ever came by the will of man; but men spake from God, being moved (more literally, being 'borne along,' or 'carried along') by the Holy Spirit." (2 Pet. 1:21, R. V.) This being true, of course it admits of no question that the Holy Spirit is the best interpreter of the

Bible, and the man who in his study of the Word seeks and obtains the illumination of the Holy Spirit is a far more dependable interpreter of the Word than the greatest scholar on earth who is not illumined by the Holy Spirit. As we pointed out last Sunday, “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and *he* cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged.” (1 Cor. 2:14, R. V.) Therefore, no matter how well founded one’s claims to scholarship may be, if he is not a Spirit-taught man his interpretations of the Word of God are absolutely valueless. The humblest and most uneducated Christian here who is taught by the Spirit of God would be a far more competent and reliable interpreter of the scripture than the greatest university professor, or theological professor, on earth who was not in right relations to God and, therefore, was not taught by the Spirit of God. Our Lord Jesus said to His disciples on the night before His crucifixion, “Howbeit when *He*, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13, R. V.). Now while this promise was made primarily to the apostles and is a guarantee of their inspiration and their absolute dependability as teachers, it also belongs in a lesser way to the individual believer. John, the beloved disciple, himself applies it to the believer. He says in 1 John 2:27, R. V.: “And as for you, the anointing *which ye received* (i. e., the Holy Spirit) of Him (i. e., from Christ) abideth in

you, and *ye need not that any one teach you*; but as *His anointing teacheth you concerning all things.*” So in your study of the Bible, in your eager desire to discover its true meaning, your determination to find out the exact mind of God, as He has revealed it in His Word, **ABOVE ALL ELSE SEEK THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.** The way to get His guidance is to ask for it. Our Lord Jesus Himself said, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit *to them that ask Him.*” (Luke 11:13, R. V.) How often you have thought as you have heard some Bible teacher who has been especially helpful to you, “Oh, if I could only go to that man every day and have him for my teacher, I would make some progress in the knowledge of the things of God.” But every time you open your Bible alone by yourself, you can have a far more competent and skillful teacher than any human Bible teacher this world ever saw. You may have the Author of the Book to interpret it to you, and the greatest of all secrets of true interpretation of the Word of God is to have the Spirit of God for your interpreter of the Word. And if you are in right relations to God, trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ as the sole ground of your acceptance before God, looking to the Risen Christ to give you daily victory over sin, absolutely surrendered in your will and your affections and in your thoughts to the will and mind of God, **and then ask the Holy**

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Spirit each time you open the Word, to come and interpret it to you, and really mean it, and are whole-heartedly willing to accept and act upon what the Holy Spirit will show you, you may have the Holy Spirit as your Interpreter every time you open THE Book.

CHAPTER IV

THE SEVEN GREAT PROMISES OF GOD FOR THE BIBLE STUDENT AND SOUL-WINNER

I have turned over the matter in my mind for some weeks as to what subject I should speak upon this morning to the Graduating Class. I thought it was pretty well settled in my mind that I should speak on 2 Tim. 4:5, "Make full proof of thy ministry." But not many days ago I was so stirred by reading a book entitled "Modern Religious Liberalism" that I was strongly disposed to speak on "What to Do with the Bible," and had the sermon outlined in my mind. But when I went to God in definite prayer about it last Monday afternoon, He gave me the subject "The Seven Great Promises of God for the Bible Student and Soul-winner." For two years you have been diligently studying the Bible under the direction and encouragement of some of the best known students and teachers of the Bible in the world, and you have been studying it, not merely that you might get as complete an intellectual mastery of it as possible, but that you might find equipment for the most glorious work in the world, that of soul-winning. But you certainly are not foolish enough to think that your studies are now at an end. Only

a hopeless fool could fancy for a moment that two years of study anywhere, or under any teachers that ever lived, could exhaust this Book in which are hidden the infinite and inexhaustible treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God. Your Bible studies are just begun. Bible study is to be your life-long employment, and you are going out to wear yourselves out in the great work for which you have been preparing—soul-winning. You are not all to be foreign missionaries, or ministers of the Gospel at home, but you are to be soul-winners all your days; some in the foreign field; some in large churches, some in small churches, and some in obscure and neglected unchurched fields at home; and some of you in that most hallowed of all fields of soul-winning, upon which the Bible lays so much emphasis, the Christian home. But all of you, by the good hand of God upon you, are to be soul-winners. So I can think of no more appropriate subject for this most joyous, and at the same time most solemn, occasion than that which I have announced, *The Seven Great Promises of God for the Bible Student and Soul-winner.*

I. The First Great Promise

The first Great Promise is from Psalm 1:1-3: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scorn-

ful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” Please look at that promise steadily and with open eyes and clear eyes until you take in its wonderful meaning, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and *whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*” God here promises to the Bible student and the would-be Soul-winner, that if he meets one of the fundamental conditions of profitable Bible study, thorough-going separation from the world, not walking in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standing in the way of sinners, nor sitting in the seat of the scornful, and then meditates in God’s own Law, the revealed will of God, as found in this Book, which is demonstrably “the Word of God” (Mark 7:13; 1 Thess. 2:13), meditates in it day and night, then he shall be a fruitful tree, a constantly, perpetually fruitful tree, a well-watered tree, watered by the streams of life that flow from the throne of God through the channels of this wonderful Book, and that “**WHATSOEVER HE**

DOETH SHALL PROSPER." What an amazing promise! What a stupendous promise! And what an all-sufficient promise for the Bible student who is about to enter upon his life work. Young men and women, you certainly long for a good share of prosperity, but, oh! to think of it, that there is a way to make sure of it, that *everything* you may do in these coming days and years shall prosper. If any one in your position can face a promise like that and not have to put forth some effort to keep from shouting I can hardly understand it.

Be Sure You Meet the Conditions of the Fulfillment of the Promise.

1. *The first condition is separation from the world in all your conduct*, not walking "in the counsel" (or, advice) of those who are not fully surrendered to God, not standing in the way that sinners go, nor sitting down "in the seat of the scornful," or "scoffers," as the Revised Version translates, and this includes all "Higher Critics" and "New Theology" men and other infidels, whose chief stock in trade is making light of what God Himself says and of the most fundamental and precious doctrines of our faith. If you find yourself located in some "seat" of learning where, as at the Chicago University, they *make light* of the precious truths of God (that is the exact force of the Hebrew word translated "scornful" in the Authorized Version and "scoffers" in the Revised

Version), get up out of that "seat" right off, do not "sit in the seat of scoffers."

2. *And the second condition is, that you meditate in God's Word day and night*, that is, that you deeply, profoundly, continuously ponder the revelation God has made in this Book; that you not merely study the Bible for a quarter of an hour or a half hour or even an hour every day, but that you store up in your mind and heart what you there find and ponder it day and night. Young men and women, never forget that. There will be a great pressure of work upon you in the coming days, and many books and papers and magazines and reviews will clamor for your attention, but stoutly and steadfastly refuse to let either the demands of service or of other literature than the Bible crowd out the precious Word of God, meditation day and night upon which, and upon which alone, spells *prosperity* in everything you undertake.

Why is it that so many missionaries and ministers and other Christian workers are so little prospered? The answer is found right here, because they give so little time to actually meditating upon the Word of God; because they let work or other lines of study crowd out the Word of God, or else they ponder it without that clearness of vision that comes from clear-cut separation from the world and from all "modernists" and other scoffers.

II. The Second Great Promise

The second Great Promise of God for the Bible Student and Soul-winner is Daniel 12:3: "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." This is a great promise for Bible students as well as for Soul-winners, for it is only the Bible student who is really "wise." It is the "entrance of God's words" that "giveth light;" that "giveth understanding unto the simple" (Psalm 119:130). No one can be truly wise, wise with real wisdom, the wisdom that counts for eternity, as well as time, unless he is a Bible student. So God tells us in this striking promise that *the Bible student* shall "shine as the brightness of the firmament" and *the Soul-winner* "as the stars forever and ever." Every red-blooded man and every woman who is worth while longs to shine. If you did not wish to shine for your own sake, you ought to have a great ambition to shine for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake. He Himself bids us shine. He says in Matt. 5:14, 16, "Ye are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Well, this promise tells us how to shine, how to gloriously shine, how to shine, not for the few

brief days of this fleeting life that now is, but "forever and ever." Be a Bible student, a Real Bible Student, and be a Soul-winner; for "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." Oh, that large but foolish company of men and women, including not a few ministers and theological teachers and writers, who wish to shine down here, to have a cheap reputation for "advanced scholarship," forgetting that the history of the world and the church is forever demonstrating that the "advanced scholarship" of to-day is the ridiculous nonsense of to-morrow. Young men and women, listen, it is not worth while to shine down here, to get all sorts of degrees and titles attached to your name because you are untrue to God and His inspired Word. Look back and see how the shores of past time are strewed with the whitened wrecks of men who shone in an apostate church. No, do not care a fig to shine as a great "pulpit orator," or "pulpit humorist," or pulpit mountebank, or a pulpit comforter by holding out false hopes to those who desire to live careless and worldly and pleasure-seeking lives; it does not pay to shine down here, even as a "golden-tongued pulpit orator." It does pay to shine up yonder, to "shine as the stars forever and ever." *And there is only one way to shine up yonder, by being a Real Bible Student and a Soul-winner.*

III. The Third Great Promise

The third Great Promise of God for the Bible Student and Soul-winner you will find in Psalm 126:6: “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” Here is another promise that stirs the alert and intelligent soul to its very depths. What intelligent harvester does not long to come home laden down with mighty sheaves of golden grain? But what other harvest is so desirable as the harvest of precious souls? This, too, is a promise, as we shall see shortly, for both the Bible Student and Soul-winner, a Soul-winner just because he is a Bible student. It tells us how to come, when our brief but laborious harvest time is over, bringing our golden sheaves with us. Listen, “*He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him.*” Just three conditions of a bountiful harvest: “*goeth forth,*” “*weepeth,*” “*bearing precious seed.*” Let me change the order.

1. First, “*Bearing precious seed.*” What the “*precious seed*” is that must be borne if we are to reap an abundant harvest of the right sort, our Lord Jesus Himself tells us in Luke 8:11, “*The seed is the Word of God.*” That is the only

seed that is worth sowing, or that will bring a harvest of souls. Men are born again, Peter tells us, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the word of God*, which liveth and abideth forever." (1 Pet. 1:23.) To sow the Word, we must know the Word; so you can see how this is a promise for the Bible student as well as for the Soul-winner. The Revised Version reads in place of "precious seed," "seed *for sowing*," and the Hebrew words mean just that or "a sowing of seed;" and the only seed that is fit for "sowing" in the prepared soil of the human heart is GOD'S WORD. Here, too, we see why it is so many preachers and missionaries and personal workers gather such scant harvests; they are sowing something beside the Word of God. Go listen to many sermons and note how little there is of the unmixed seed of the Word of God in them, so much bull's-eye daisies and chess and Canada thistles of man's notions and vagaries and speculations and conceits mixed in, until their churches look like some alleged "wheat fields" that we see, full of daisies, mustard, "the devil's paint-brush," Canada thistles and bull thistles and nettles. Oh, young men and women, always bear the "precious seed" of God's Word and only that. If some one tells you it won't draw like poetry and moonshine and "advanced thought" and movies, think of Moody and Spurgeon and some of the things your own eyes have seen these past months in this very building and elsewhere.

2. Then note the words, "*goeth forth.*" "*He that goeth forth* and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." It is not enough to have the seed, *go sow it*. Sow it far and wide, throughout America, not forgetting the neglected fields, through China, through Japan, through Africa, through India, everywhere. It is not the seed the farmer has in his granary that brings a harvest, but the seed he sows in his field; and *it is not the truth you know, but the truth you sow that will bear a harvest*. Remember it is "*seed for sowing*" (R. V.), and the truth you have learned from the study of God's Word here and the truth you shall learn in your future study of the Word is "*seed for sowing.*" Never forget that. Many a man who knows little gathers a far more abundant harvest than many who know much, for what little he knows he assiduously sows.

3. And once more in regard to this promise: *Note the words, "and weepeth."* It is not enough to know the Word of God and it is not enough to sow the Word of God: if you would have a bounteous harvest, if you would come "*bringing your sheaves with*" you, you must as you sow the seed, water it with your tears. Not only does the Word of God teach, but experience also abundantly proves that it is the Word of God that is given with a heart full of love for sinners, a love that shows itself in tears of sympathy for the sinner's

sorrows and tears of pain over the sinner's sin and stubbornness, that bears fruit in souls saved. Here is where many missionaries in the foreign field fail and many preachers at home fail; they have no deep heartfelt love that leads to tears for those to whom they preach and with whom they work. One of the mightiest Soul-winners among the outcast that this country ever saw was Col. George Clark, the founder of the Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago. Col. Clark worked faithfully at his business six days of the week that he might preach the Gospel without pay seven nights in the week. Every night they would gather in the Pacific Garden Mission, four or five hundred men, mostly of the down-and-out class. They would hang upon every word Col. Clark spoke, though he was not an interesting speaker, indeed a very ordinary and commonplace speaker. I never heard him give an original thought in all my life, and yet those outcasts would sit all the evening and hang upon his words. Some of the most brilliant speakers in America would go there, but could not hold that crowd, but Col. Clark always could. I studied these strange phenomena and finally found the explanation of them. They knew that Col. Clark loved them, that he would give his last penny for them, that he would wear his life out for them, as he actually did. Col. Clark was a man much given to tears as he spoke. He was a large, powerful man, weighing perhaps 250 pounds, and tears from such a man seemed out

of place, and after a while he became ashamed of his many tears and held them back. But he found that with the drying up of his tears he lost his power; and he went to God and cried, "Oh, God, give me back my tears," and God gave him back his tears and gave him back his power. Young men and women, cultivate a real, heartfelt love for those among whom you work. Ask the Holy Spirit to make real to you their lost condition and to make vivid to you their coming doom if they are not saved. **IT IS NOT THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE MOST BUT THE ONE WHO LOVES THE MOST WHO WINS THE MOST.** I think I would make a good missionary to the Chinese, for I love the Chinese; I confess I love them more than I do any other people. But look to God to give you a tear-bringing love *for any people* among whom you work.

IV. The Fourth Great Promise

The fourth Great Promise of God for the Bible Student and Soul-winner you will find in James 1:5, R. V.: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." This, too, is a great promise for the Bible student and Soul-winner. To be a successful student of the Word one needs "*wisdom*" and to be a successful Soul-winner, one needs great "*wisdom*" and tact. This promise tells how to get

this wisdom, *ask for it*. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” What to do is put in one word, “*ask*;” *definite, believing prayer*. The next two verses say, “But let him ask in *faith*, nothing doubting; for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.” Our promise tells us very clearly of Whom to ask. It is put in two words, “*of God*.” Be very clear about that. There is much asking that is not really “*of God*.” Men pray, but they do not really get into the presence of God, and “*ask of Him*.” Be sure you do every time you pray.

And note carefully of what God to ask, the “*God, Who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not*.” There is only one God who does that, the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. There is much that is called praying in these days that is not unto Him. Prof. Theodore Gerald Soares, Professor of Homiletics and Religious Education and Head of the Department of Practical Theology at the University of Chicago, says, “The mental state of peace, exultation and resolution which issue upon the exercise of prayer are *due to the release of conscious tension*.” That certainly is not praying to the “*God, Who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not*,” even if the writer is a theological professor. President

G. Stanley Hall, of Clark University, Worcester, Mass., says that prayer is "communion with the deeper racial self within us." That certainly is not asking of the "God, Who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not." Prof. George Burman Foster, who was for a while professor in the theological department of Chicago University, and then Professor of Philosophy of Religion in another department in the University up to the time of his death, said, "the only prayer which we have a moral right to pray is precisely the prayer which after all we ourselves must answer." That certainly is not asking of the "God, Who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not." Prof. Edward Scribner Ames, Associate Professor of Chicago University, and Pastor of Hyde Park Church of Disciples of Christ, in his book, "The New Orthodoxy," says, "For the modern man standing erect in his *pride of power*, the old ceremony full of passivity and surrender is *a symbol of a dying age*." That certainly is not asking of the "God, Who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not." Prof. Gerald Birney Smith, at the present time "*Professor of Christian Theology*" at the Chicago University, says, "*the worship of God* in a democracy will consist in *reverence for those human values which democracy makes supreme*." That certainly is not asking of the "God, Who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not." I would as soon think of sending a son of mine to a smallpox hospital as a

health resort as to send him to a theological Seminary or University where such blasphemous folly as that is taught, as a preparation for an efficient ministry or for missionary work. Are our Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians gone mad that they send their children to institutions where such wicked, blasphemous and practically atheistic things are taught? But **REAL PRAYER TO A REAL GOD**, the only true God, the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, brings wondrous wisdom in the study of the Word of God and in Soul-winning. No other shovel digs so deep into the gold mine of God's Word and throws out such nuggets of pure gold as prayer, *real prayer to a real God*. No other rain-maker will so operate upon the clouds of God's abundant grace that always overhang us and bring down such mighty outpourings of the Holy Spirit manifesting themselves in a multitude of souls won as *real prayer to a real God*. *Never forget that.* NEVER, NEVER, NEVER FORGET THAT.

V. The Fifth Great Promise

This naturally and inevitably brings us to *the Fifth Great Promise of God for the Bible Student and Soul-winner*. You will find it in *Acts 1:8*: “*Ye shall receive power, AFTER THE HOLY GHOST is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost*

part of the earth.” The great need of missionary, minister and personal worker, and father and mother, when they study God’s Word and when they go out to win souls, is power, power to penetrate the sacred cloisters of God’s Word where such abundant treasures of truth are stored and power to present to others the truth discovered in such a way as to convict of sin and reveal Jesus Christ and to bring men to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour and thus be born again. This verse reveals the great secret of that power: “Ye shall receive power, *after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you:* and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” We need power, a power not from this earth, not from human culture, not the power learned in schools of oratory, nor the power that comes from the tricks of the world, baptized with Christian names, as in the “Interchurch World Movement,” not the power to draw crowds learned from Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford or Charlie Chaplin, and crystallized in the introduction of the movies into the Sunday evening service, turning the sacred house of God into a third-class Sunday theatrical performance. No! No!! No!!! “POWER FROM ON HIGH” (Luke 24:49). This promise tells us how to get it. It tells us how any graduate of the Bible Institute, or any child of God, can get it. Listen again, “Ye shall receive power, *after that the*

Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth;” THE DEFINITE BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT, of which Peter said on the day of Pentecost, immediately after he himself had been “baptized with the Holy Spirit,” “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto Him.”

VI. The Sixth Great Promise

This then leads us directly to *the Sixth Great Promise of God for the Bible Student and Soul-winner*. You will find it in Luke 11:13: “*If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.*” The fifth promise tells us, that “*power from on High,*” power right from God, God’s own power, will be upon us after the Holy Spirit comes upon us, and the sixth promise tells us how to make sure of the Holy Spirit coming upon you, “*If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.*” The way is very simple, just “*ask,*” “*ask HIM,*” that is, God, the only true God, the “*Heavenly Father,*” not the God that “*is imminent in humanity*” of which

these wise New Theologists prate, but “the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” “Who is in Heaven,” the Real God, *the God who actually is*, and not the God of man’s mad imaginings. Prof. Walter Rauschenbusch, now dead (died in 1918), formerly Professor of Church History in Rochester Theological Seminary, a Baptist institution, said, “the old conception that God . . . is distinct from our human life” must give way to “the religious belief that He is immanent in humanity.” Do not ask for the Holy Spirit of such a God as that, ask of the Real God, your “Father in heaven.” Prof. Royce, late of Harvard University, says, “the divine is *no more separate and aloof*. It is within and organic with the human.” The same thought is elsewhere put in these words, “God is considered as the soul of the world, the spirit animating nature, the universal force which takes the myriad forms of heat, light, gravitation, electricity and the like.” Do not ask any such God as that to give you the Holy Spirit. You might as well pray to a Hindoo or Chinese idol or an Alaskan totem. Prof. Gerald Birney Smith, Professor of Christian Theology at the present time in Chicago University, speaks of God as “the spiritual *forces* of the world in which we live, the unseen *forces* of the universe.” Do not ask that God for the Holy Spirit. Prof. Royce defines God as the immanent “spirit of the community.” Do not ask that God for the Holy Spirit. No, do not pray to the God

of any of *this sort of* theological Seminary and University professors who, "professing themselves to be wise," have "become fools." (Rom. 1:22.) PRAY TO THE REAL God the God Whom the Lord Jesus revealed in His words and in His Person, our "Heavenly Father," the God Who really is and really answers prayer, and if you really are His child, He will answer and He will baptize you and fill you with His Holy Spirit, and you will have power, and no man will be "able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which (you) speak." (Acts 6:10.)

VII. The Seventh Great Promise

Now we come to *the seventh and last Great Promise of God for the Bible Student and Soul-winner, and in some respects it is the best of all.* It is the direct outcome of the sixth promise and closely related to the fifth and fourth promises. You will find it in Matt. 28:19, 20, R. V.: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Oh, what a promise! The promise of the personal presence of our Lord Jesus Himself with us all the time, "until the consummation of the age," when He will come visibly and bodily to take us

to be with Himself forever. He is now our unseen Lord (1 Pet. 1:8) up yonder in the glory, interceding for us (Heb. 7:25), taking up our case, and advocating it and carrying it through. But *He is also, even now, our present Lord*. It is the work of the Holy Spirit, when He comes to us, to form within us an *indwelling Christ*. The Lord Jesus Himself said to His disciples the night before He left them, in John 14:15-23, R. V.: “If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and *he shall give you another Comforter*, that he may be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him: ye know him; for he abideth with you and shall be in you. I will not leave you desolate: *I come unto you*: Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me: because I live, ye shall live also. In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and *will manifest myself unto him*. Judas (not Iscariot) saith unto him, Lord, what is come to pass that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and *we will come unto him, and make our abode with him*.” Yes, He is really with us, not visibly as in that glad coming day

He will be, but nonetheless, really and consciously with us. Young men and women, as you leave these halls and these friendships with the Faculty and your fellow-students that have become so precious to you, you will have many lonely hours and lonely days and lonely weeks. I think the loneliest day I ever saw up to that time was the day I graduated at Yale and left the city on a late boat for New York. Most of my class took earlier trains. It seemed as if I would almost die of loneliness. Forty-six years have passed, but the memory of the misery of that night lingers with me yet. And you will have lonely days. And when you get into the heart of China and into the heart of Africa and into Indian jungles, you will see lonely days. But you need not see lonely days, you need not see a lonely hour, or a lonely minute. By day and by night, you may have the dearest and best, and most satisfying of all companions, our glorious Lord Jesus Himself. Listen again to this crowning promise of all: “Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you: and *lo, I am with you always, even unto the consummation of the age.*” Ah, this coming summer when some night I am up alone on the Yangtze or elsewhere, out in some lonely mountain or desert plain, I might be lonely, but I won’t, Jesus will be there

and He will be with you too if you meet the conditions.

Note these conditions well, "*Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations*, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: *and lo, I am with you always, even unto the consummation of the age.*" If you go out into all the world making disciples, going as far as your line may extend, be it eighteen miles or eighteen thousand miles, He will go with you. But if you do not listen sharply for His call, and go as far as He bids you go, He will not go with you. If we go His way, He will go ours; but if we do not go His way, He will not go ours. If God says Africa, and your foolish heart says Southern California, He will not go with you: and amid the dearest friends on earth, you will be supremely lonely. But if you say with Isaiah of old when the Lord Jesus calls, and He is calling now, "*Here am I; send me*" (Isa. 6:8) He will send and He will go along. You may be alone beneath the silent stars on some African table-land, but you will not be alone. He, our glorious Lord will walk by your side. And He is enough. And you will walk with Him forever; for He hath said, "*If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will the Father honor.*" (John 12:26.)

Young men and women of the Graduating Class:

You have been here at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles two years. You have worked hard. You have done well. You have made satisfactory progress in your study of the Word of God, in your Christian character and in your work for Christ. You have won the confidence and respect and love of every member of the Faculty, and I think we can rest confident that we have won your love, as well as your confidence. You are about to leave us, we are sorry to have you go, we shall greatly miss you. When I come back next November and look out over the seats in the lecture room, my first impulse will be to look for the faces that I know so well and to listen for the voices that I have learned to distinguish from one another, and I shall miss you and every member of the Faculty will miss you. But we are glad you are going. There was never in all this world's history such a crying demand for men and women who know God, who know Jesus Christ, who know the Holy Spirit, who know their Bibles and how to use them in winning souls for Christ, as in the day in which you and I live. We shall follow you with our prayers. We expect you to do credit, both by your holy living and your effective service, to the Institute that sends you forth, but what is infinitely more important, to our God and Father and to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. God bless you.













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